

SIERRA LEONE AND WORLD WAR 1

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by

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"...in such a war, the natives over whose heads it is fought, wholly devoid of responsibility for it are, will always be the greatest sufferers, no matter how we may try to spare them; and from the point of view of European prestige...nothing is more calculated to weaken the respect of the natives for the Whitemen as a race than to make them the witness of our quarrels, unless it be to enlist their assistance in arms against our fellow whites,..."

Source -

Henry Duff - "Whitemen's wars in Black men's countries" in the *National Review*, No. 504, February, 1925, p102.

SIERRA LEONE AND WORLD WAR 1

Thesis Abstract

Though Sierra Leone was not a theatre of war in 1914, World War 1 had significant consequences for the dependency. Convinced that the crisis was not just a "Whiteman's palaver," Sierra Leone supported the Allies against the Central Powers.

Fearing reprisals from Germany, Governor Merewether warned against denuding the Protectorate of troops but the global emergency was, in the opinion of the Colonial Office, more important than the interests of the Colony. Thus between 1914 and 1917, Sierra Leoneans were recruited for service in Togoland and the Cameroons and to help fight Britain's "porters' war" in East Africa. If recruitment reduced the crime rate in Freetown it also took away able-bodied men from agriculture. Returnees from the Cameroons worsened the problems of unemployment and sanitation.

The war exposed the vulnerability of Sierra Leone to the spread of disease. Congestion, increased international trade contacts and the lack of fumigation facilities for ships at Freetown's harbour, helped the spread of smallpox and influenza. Whilst smallpox threatened whole villages, and dislocated farming, influenza paralysed education and arrested progress in the oil palm industry.

Economically, the war hindered developments in the import and

export sectors. By 1915 dwindling revenue returns pointed to the need for financial stringency. The problems of economic decline, high prices for imported goods and the manipulative tactics of foreign firms were felt mainly by indigenous producers and consumers. The chief variables governing economic activity were unfavourable climatic conditions, the high tariff rates on spirits, tax evasion in the Protectorate and the closure of the German market. Thus growth in revenue in 1918 did not indicate any widespread accumulation of wealth. Economic problems impinged significantly on the already depleted supplies of food in wartime. Rice smuggling over the frontier, the requisitioning of rice by the military authorities, the hoarding of rice by traders and the famine of 1919 aggravated food shortages and provided the triggers for rural and urban violence.;

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was conceived whilst I was conducting research for a Masters thesis at Fourah Bay College on the origins and impact of the Colonial army in Sierra Leone. The motivation was supplied by my late father Emmanuel Cole who enlisted as a depression Range Finder in the Heavy Battery, Royal Artillery Machine Gun Section in 1937. It was largely as a result of his efforts that the Sierra Leone recruit was offered boots by the British administration even though the question of boots had begun to exercise the minds of the authorities since 1902. By the outbreak of war in 1914 recruits in Sierra Leone had still not been given boots though the question was considered again in 1916. Men like R.S.M. Morlai Yainkain, C.S.M. Kamanda, Sergeant Momo Sanko, Lance Coporal Sorie Kanu and Private Momodu Alpha (all of the Sierra Battalion) thus had to contend barefoot with the hazards of the terrain in the Cameroons and the problems of bush warfare in East Africa.

It is partly in memory of these (and many more) men who suffered and died that this work is written. If there is a tendency to forget their contributions to the fortunes "of king and country" between 1914 and 1918, this work celebrates the sacrifices they made by "reviving" many a neglected document.

All too often the history of Sierra Leone in the twentieth century has been smudged by political and "tribal rifts" which have torn the society apart and led the military to

step into the shoes of civilians. Unfortunately some Sierra Leonean historians have added to these divisions by seeking "tribal" justification and answers to historical questions. Above all the failure to dig deep into the "crystal fountains" of archives has inevitably sharpened these divisions and done material damage to the historiography of Sierra Leone. Rather than leave much to the imagination, this work provides a comprehensive history of Sierra Leone between 1914 and 1919. It offers details and interpretations rather than generalisations and concentrates on the concrete rather than the abstract. If there is a tendency toward detail in some places, it is hoped that this will illuminate rather obscure some of the main themes of Sierra Leone's history in the early twentieth century. Such themes include attempts by colonial governments to balance revenue and expenditure, disease, medicine and health, food shortages, rural and urban radicalism, and deteriorating Anglo-Krio relations.

A work of this nature owes a great debt to many people. My debt is greatest to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for providing the bursary and financial assistance which enabled me to conduct research in Britain. Many thanks are due to Theresa (formerly Ms Harvey and then British Council Representative in Sierra Leone) Koroma for making this possible; for her encouragement and inspiration amidst intense opposition from the University Secretariat in Sierra Leone, and for enabling me to travel back home to conduct field work. I gladly acknowledge the unflinching support offered by Professor Akintola Wyse - for enhancing the motivation and stimulus for this work and for making bold

sacrifices on my behalf even in the face of threats from University authorities at Fourah Bay College. The completion of this work is ample recompense for all the fruitful and stimulating discussions we had since he became Head of Department at Fourah Bay College.

I am more than grateful to Richard Rathbone (my supervisor at S.O.A.S.) for sustaining that stimulus; for teaching me so much about scholarship and fellowship; for his friendship, dedication and good humour; for helping to broaden my comparative perspective and for bolstering my confidence whenever it tended to wane.

My other obligations are legion. I am deeply indebted to Albert Moore of the Sierra Leone National Archives whose efficiency and fortitude helped to locate many a document that could easily elude even the most meticulous of researchers. I am also grateful to the staff of the following archives and libraries: Fourah Bay College Library, Sierra Leone Collection, the Public Record Office, London, The British Library, Colindale, the staff at the former Royal Commonwealth Society Library, London, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, the staff at S.O.A.S. Library, University of London and the Imperial War Museum.

I owe much to the stimulus of Christopher Fyfe whose encyclopaedic knowledge of Sierra Leone history helped in some instances to sharpen my focus and analysis; to Joy, Secretary, Department of History at S.O.A.S., and Pascal Codwyll (a very special friend) for introducing me to the

many crucibles of computer technology. A final debt is owed to Jackie for typing the thesis and for accommodating a motley of idiosyncratic shifts and changes at unreasonably short notice.

While the work is certainly the better for the help I have been given, I alone am responsible for errors found therein.

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Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, 1915

NOTE.—Rowalla is about 1½ miles to right (east side) of line after line leaves Makomp Stn. going towards Makene *via* Rosanda.
[Two new Stations opened 1914
Sa Leone, 15-4-15.

First and Second Class R^d Shewn Thus —

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Though Sierra Leone was not a theatre of war in 1914, World War 1 enhanced significantly the importance of the dependency as a depot in Britain's imperial network.¹ Apart from its strategic position on the west coast of Africa, Sierra Leone was important not only for supplying troops, carriers and labourers to the various theatres of war but also for providing material resources to help maintain the troops.² By the time of the outbreak significant improvements had been made in communications. Railway³ construction and bridge building⁴ were proceeding with relative ease facilitating greater exchange of goods and movements of people between the Colony and the Protectorate. More importantly, developments in harbour facilities⁵ improved international trade not only with other West African countries but with Europe as well. Germany, France, Holland and (to a lesser extent) the United States of America had thus succeeded in establishing some foothold in the import and export trade of the country.⁶

In the wake of railway construction came foreign firms seeking concessions in the oil palm industry.⁷ The Syrians who between the late 1880's and 1913 had made significant inroads into the wholesale and retail trade of the country were also by the outbreak of war, still streaming into the country from French Guinea following the railway to tap the new opportunities open to them.⁸

Paradoxically as will be shown in the thesis, the blessings of communication and trade were to prove a curse in disguise

during the war. If troops returning from the various theatres of war brought disease to the dependency, the strategic position of Freetown, developments in communication and international trade facilitated the spread of smallpox and influenza. Whilst recruitment for service overseas dislocated family life, it also removed many able bodied men away from agriculture. Ironically also increased commercial activity was to prove disastrous for indigenous producers and traders as foreign firms established trade rings to control the export trade and shipping during the war. Why therefore was Sierra Leone so important during World War 1?

SIERRA LEONE IN THE CONTEXT OF EMPIRE

Situated close to the main trade routes between Europe, West Africa and South Africa and very close to the routes from Europe across the South Atlantic Ocean, Sierra Leone was destined to play a major role militarily and economically in World War 1. With a magnificent harbour situated half-way to the Cape and with ample supplies of fresh water, the dependency had for long been constituted as a fortified coaling station.⁹

In considering the "natural capabilities and advantages of the place," the Sierra Leone Gazette had in 1827 expressed the hope that the Colony "might be made one of the brightest jewels in the British Crown."¹⁰ At least since 1787 when the "famous harbour" acted as a "sanctuary for so many liberated Africans"¹¹ imperial strategists had come to regard Sierra Leone as the key to the defence of British territories in West Africa and as a strategic colony in the imperial chain

because of its importance as a coaling station. In the event of war therefore, British sea power was expected to prevent other European powers from supplying and reinforcing local African forces or using West Africa as a base for attack against India.¹²

With a total area of 27,300 square miles,¹³ it was chiefly the geographical position of Sierra Leone which made it so important to naval and military strategists during World War 1. Long before the threat of war, it was active British policy to protect the important trade routes along the Atlantic Ocean. The need therefore to prevent these routes being used by enemy ships and the harassment of enemy sea-borne commerce, constituted the primary duties of the navy. Regarded as "the gateway of West Africa"¹⁴ Sierra Leone came to acquire greater importance in the context of empire mainly because three of the most important trade routes in the British Empire passed within a comparatively short distance of the dependency. One route passed from Europe to South America and another (very important in the trade of the empire) from Europe to West African ports.¹⁵

The route from Europe to Australia and New Zealand via the Cape of Good Hope was probably the most controversial. The construction of the Suez Canal had diverted a large amount of commerce from this route but it should be observed that the distance from Melbourne to England via the Cape is only 850 miles greater than by the Canal route. Thus, if the Canal route was blocked, this would mean using the Cape route extensively. In fact this route was heavily used during the war to convey troops and food though Britain still retained

Egypt, Malta and Gibraltar. Freetown came to serve as a convenient base for ships used in protecting these routes; it was therefore vital to protect the dependency against enemy attacks for were the Colony to be captured by a hostile power, this was bound to endanger the safety of sea communications with South America, the Cape and Australia. As the link between Gibraltar and Simon's Town, (also a naval dockyard) the Colony occupied a midway position between Simon's Town and the British Isles. It was therefore well placed to serve as a rendezvous for convoys of ships on the Cape route or for those plying between the United Kingdom and West African ports.¹⁶ Freetown served this purpose during the war and was also an important base for mercantile shipping sailing for the U.K. "from South American ports, and from Australian ports via Cape Horn or the Straits of Magellan."¹⁷

Of greater importance was the role of Sierra Leone in providing a base for the replenishment of stores, the provision of fuel and for effecting repairs to cruisers employed in the protection of merchant shipping.¹⁸ So vital was Freetown in the imperial network that between 1909 and 1913 (except for 1910 when yellow fever threatened the dependency) the port was the scene of much vibrant shipping activity.¹⁹ Many steamers chiefly from Britain traded with Sierra Leone before the war. A regular mail and passenger service was maintained by the vessels of the African Steamship Company and the British and African Steam Navigation Company, both of which were run by Messrs Elder Dempster and Company. The service boats operated by the

latter sailed from London, Liverpool and other ports at regular intervals calling at both Freetown, and Bonthe. In this way trade was maintained by these services between the Colony and Canada, the United States, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Bordeaux, Havre and the African coast.²⁰

In a trade in which various nations participated, the only competition came from Germany whose express mail and passenger boats of the Woermann Line began calling at the port in 1911. So vigorous was German competition that by the outbreak of war the German business firm, the Deutsche Kamerun Gesellschaft was firmly established at Freetown and Bonthe and was rapidly opening up branches in Blama and Kenema in the Protectorate.²¹ So important was Freetown to Germany that in 1918, the German Colonial Secretary declared that "one of the first results of Teutonic victory would have been the seizure and utilisation of the British West African colonies, especially Sierra Leone."²² It is against this background that we must understand the determined German efforts to cripple British shipping during the war.²³

As a strategic entrepot of trade Freetown before the war was a distributing centre for British and other foreign goods. A burgeoning network of communications ensured a successful import and export trade. Well provided with waterways useful for transportation²⁴ steamers called at the sub-ports of Mano Salija, Sulima, Kikonke, Mahela and Gene for produce,²⁵ tapping the trade of the Moa valley, Mopalma, Pujehun and its adjoining towns of Deah, Yoni, Victoria and Timdale.²⁶ Though there were few roads suitable for motor traffic outside Freetown on the eve of war²⁷ feeder roads with hard surfaces

had begun to converge on the more important railway stations-Moyamba, Bo, Blama, Hangha, Segbwema, Baima and Pendembu by 1913.²⁸ With its main line running south-eastwards from Freetown by Waterloo, Bauya, Bo, and Blama to Baima, railway construction was revolutionising trade in many parts of the Protectorate and by 1912, the branch line to Rowalla in Ronietta District had been opened to traffic²⁹ attracting a greater volume of trade and foreign firms which came to play a controversial role in the export trade during the war. In 1913 for example, Messrs Lever Bros were seeking permission to lay down tramways or mono-rails in Ronietta and to erect mechanical mills to express oil from the pericarp of the palm fruit.³⁰

By the eve of war, the principal firms included Messrs Pickering and Berthoud, Paterson Zochonis and Company, G.B. Ollivant, the Societe Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain, the French Company, the firm of Monsieur A Genet and Company, P. Ratcliffe and Company and others.³¹ The results of developments in communications and commerce on the eve of war, were enormous. As traders followed the railway, small centres developed into large towns. Mano on the main line and Sembehun in Ronietta came to constitute important trading centres where the staple trade in palm produce was supplemented by a brisk business in rice during the harvest. Kangahun, the station before Mano on the main line also developed encouragingly during 1912.³² Originally designed to be the terminus of the branch line, "a mushroom town" had sprung up at Makump by 1913. Mabum itself just five miles short of Makump, was posing a threat to the latter's

importance.³³ In Railway District, Sumbuya, situated on the borders of Northern Sherbro, was served by an excellent waterway by which goods and produce could be cheaply transported to Bonthe³⁴ and from there to Freetown's strategic harbour on the west coast.

These internal developments added considerably to the overall importance of the dependency in the empire and because the harbour was so essential in the empire's trade, the land defences of Freetown had begun to attract the attention of the military authorities in 1910. Because communications formed an integral part of imperial defences, some roads were being cut in the vicinity of Signal Hill and Wilberforce Spur in 1910 to facilitate communications in the event of war and to make all ranks familiar with them in peace time.³⁵ As has been rightly argued, if the port of Freetown was to be effectively utilised during war, the cooperation of land forces was absolutely essential. The need to defend Freetown was predicated on many factors. It was in close proximity to the principal lines of sea communications; further, it was in close proximity to possible areas of conflict³⁶ especially so with the French in neighbouring Guinea and with the Germans fighting hard for control in Liberia.³⁷ So that in the event of a naval war in the Atlantic Ocean, Sierra Leone could serve as a cruiser base, convoy assembly point and fuelling station. So important was Freetown as a "routing and convoy port" that in 1924, Governor Slater was to argue that the "naval duties which Sierra Leone was being asked to undertake were becoming so numerous" that it was necessary to have a naval officer permanently stationed there to "ensure the

proper execution of these duties."³⁸

To a large extent, such considerations governed the maintenance of imperial and colonial forces in Sierra Leone long before the outbreak of World War 1 (unlike Ghana, Nigeria and the Gambia which maintained only colonial forces) On the eve of war the personnel of the Imperial garrison comprised the Command and Headquarters Staff, Royal Garrison Artillery (42nd Heavy Battery) formed in 1889. Comprising chiefly of Mende, Temne and Limba recruits, the establishment consisted of 5 European officers, 4 European NCOs, 83 rank and file and 6 guns.³⁹ The West India Regiment formed around 1812 partly because of the high mortality rate among the European soldiers of the Royal African Corps, was also part of the Imperial garrison and originally consisted of recruits from Barbados. For more than a century this regiment maintained its headquarters in the Colony leaving Bunce Island for Tower Hill in 1812 and afterwards occupying Mount Aureol.⁴⁰ By the outbreak of war, there were 4 companies still in the Colony.⁴¹

Formed chiefly in response to the outbreak of the Hut Tax rebellion of 1898, the West African Regiment which comprised chiefly Mende and Temne recruits was also intended to augment the troops of the Third Battalion, West India Regiment which had recently arrived from St. Helena.⁴² When orders were received for mobilisation, the regiment had 7 companies deployed in Freetown, 2 at Port Loko, 2 at Mabanta, and 1 at Wongkufu.⁴³ Yet perhaps of greater importance for appreciating the role of colonial forces in the British empire was the presence in the Colony of the Sierra Leone

Battalion of the Royal West African Frontier Force whose origins and history up to 1914 are traced in chapter 2. Apart from calling into question the character and prestige of British authorities in the remoter parts of the interior, the 1898 rebellion exposed the inadequacy of the Sierra Leone Frontier Police to ensure the obedience of the insurgents. It is against this background coupled with a combination of strategic considerations that the formation of the Sierra Leone Battalion should be understood. Constituted in 1901 with headquarters in Freetown, recruits were drawn mainly from the Mende and Temne groups, the Susu, Limba, Loko, and Sherbro also furnishing large numbers.⁴⁴

With memories of Mende men serving under his command in the Ashanti war of 1873-1874, Lord Wolseley had appointed an experienced staff officer to raise recruits in 1897 and his desire to develop a strong indigenous foundation for a Sierra Leone force was clearly dictated by the strategic importance attached to Freetown in Lord Carnarvon's Royal Commission Report on the defences of empire in 1879. British maritime support it was envisaged would thus multiply the effectiveness of the W A F F many times over.⁴⁵ From 1905, the supervision of convict labour was undertaken by Court Messengers and with a reserve force begun in 1906, the training of the men benefited immensely.⁴⁶ From the creation of the battalion and the subsequent absorption of a large number of the former Frontier Police, till the battalion replaced the West India Regiment which came under orders for disbandment in 1928, the energies of the W A F F were engaged in quelling internal risings⁴⁷ and up to 1908 when the

headquarters were moved from Freetown to the Protectorate, service with the battalion was very popular.⁴⁸

The battalion was essentially a colonial military force and all expenses connected with it were borne by the Colony unlike the imperial garrison which was financed by imperial funds. This dichotomy was to pose formidable problems of control in wartime when the W A F F came under War Office control.⁴⁹ On the eve war however, the fortunes of the battalion were rendered particularly hazardous when some members of the administration began to view it as a liability. The increasing outbreaks of "human leopard murders" led the District Commissioner of Northern Sherbro (Major Fairtlough) to recommend its abolition and the establishment of an armed constabulary force modelled on the lines of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Fairtlough's objections to the force were predicated on what he regarded as the high cost of maintaining the establishment (£30,000 and an additional £500 for the 2 new companies proposed) He saw the force as a purely military one contributing nothing to the administration and development of the Colony. Fairtlough argued that the 19 white officers in the force had only a cursory knowledge of the Protectorate and evinced little interest in its economic development. The Governor however countered that the moral effect of a military force "is greater among uncivilised people than that of any constabulary force".⁵⁰ In the end the battalion was maintained and was destined to help liberate the Cameroons from the Germans.

During World War 1, the fortunes of Sierra Leone were presided over by two governors whose regimes were marked by great controversy with the Colonial office and the indigenous population over many a matter of policy. Taking over the dependency in 1911 Governor E. M Merewether's term of office was noted for the bitter acrimony which his policies generated in Krio circles. Though he was to declare that his task in the Colony was "an easy one"⁵¹ the evidence shows that by 1913, there was sufficient bad blood between him and the community. In September 1913, the local bar (all Krios) vehemently opposed attempts by the Legislative Council to amend the Supreme Court's Ordinance of 1904 and secure "under certain circumstances" the admission of depositions of absent witnesses. Fed up with the blundering tactics of the Governor who regarded the opposition as "useless", the Colonial Office argued that it was "not a bad thing occasionally to let the unofficials have their way."⁵² Though the Secretary of State (Harcourt) concluded that the "Sierra Leone government was increasingly anti-native", Merewether was still replacing retired African personnel⁵³ with white officers in the legal establishment.⁵⁴ Harcourt was later to argue that "the sooner this negrophobe governor is removed elsewhere the better".⁵⁵

Merewether's governorship had clearly fallen on bad days - hemmed in as he was by an articulate public and unofficial members in the Legislative Council, and a Colonial Office that was prepared to sacrifice him in the interest of peace. On the eve of war, he was regarded as "a fearful allowance chaser" presiding over an administration that was "lethargic...one who accomplishes the minimum of results with

the maximum of friction...if there is any zeal or energy in any public office he makes it his business to ground it".⁵⁶ Despite repeated appeals prior to the war Merewether refused Krio pleas to be enlisted in the proposed Volunteer force first mooted in 1911.⁵⁷ On 15th January 1916, the governor who had been appointed to Antigua and the Leeward Islands, was captured on board the Elder Dempster liner, Appam, which after much litigation was sent to its owners in Virginia where it was released.⁵⁸

At a time when the economy was in dire straits, H E R Wilkinson assumed the governorship of Sierra Leone in 1916 after a distinguished and varied career as sheriff in Singapore, Acting Collector of Land revenue Pengang, Acting Inspector of schools, Straits Settlements, Inspector of schools, Federated Malay states, and Acting Resident, Negri Sembilan.⁵⁹

It was largely this varied career that was to inform the copious despatches which Wilkinson was later to send to the Colonial Office during the course of the war concerning education, health and sanitation, and forestry. More importantly however, Governor Wilkinson's administration was marked by an endeavour to provide adequate feeder roads to convey produce to the railway.⁶⁰ Wilkinson's roads policy was intended to substitute wheeled traffic especially motor transport for transport by carriers. Furthermore the roads were expected to release many men from the work of transport to that of direct production. Administratively, they were to provide efficiency by enabling government officers to cover

much more ground in the day and to pay surprise visits everywhere.⁶¹ Perhaps what made the governor's reign so contentious, was the controversy surrounding the outbreak of influenza in the colony in 1918, the Governor's alleged inaction and boycott of his medical staff,⁶² the disputes surrounding rice shortages and the riots against the Syrian community in 1919.⁶³

It is against this background of the strategic importance of Sierra Leone and two controversial administrations that the thesis examines the impact of recruitment on the dependency during the First World War, the impact of the spread of disease, the economic impact of war and rice shortages.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Over the last fifteen years, historians have come to evince considerable interest in the part played by Africa in World War I and this is clearly reflected in the growing literature on the subject. It is important to note however that apart from one or two country studies such as that by Osuntokun, the literature on Africa is skewed towards military recruitment in wartime and the role played by African soldiers and carriers in the African theatres of war (Togoland, the Cameroons and East Africa). Consequently the historian studying the impact of the war on African societies is still confronted by what Rathbone describes as many "areas of darkness".⁶⁴

Very few works address the political and economic policies pursued by colonial governments in their attempts to balance revenue and expenditure or the impact of the war on public

works and infrastructural developments. Themes relating to internal trade, the impact of wartime privation on indigenous producers, African merchants and the general population, the fortunes of religion in wartime and the impact of disease in various African territories are ignored. Many works are largely general surveys with a conspicuous dearth of material on Sierra Leone.⁶⁵

Most of the "Regimental Histories" trace the development of separate regiments like the Kings African Rifles and the Northern Rhodesian Regiment⁶⁶ so that in much of the foregoing literature the material on Sierra Leone is either very thin or non-existent. Such an omission justifies the need for a micro-study approach such as that by Osuntokun on Nigeria,⁶⁷ in order to produce a synthesis of the African contribution to the war effort and to emphasise the overall impact of the war on Africa.

R.P.M. Davies and Haywood and Clarke attempt to do justice to the role played by West Africans in the war, yet these attempts are limited in scope chiefly concerned as they are with the military input of West Africans in the Cameroons, Togoland and East Africa.⁶⁸ Writing from an essentially military background, Haywood and Clarke drew extensively on the war diaries relating to the period, but very little is known of the problems faced by demobilised soldiers and carriers and their relatives as they try to adjust to civil life after the end of hostilities.

In major works on Sierra Leone by both Sierra Leone and non-Sierra Leonean writers the impact of the war on Sierra Leone

is either allocated a passing reference or is not mentioned at all.⁶⁹ Thomas Cox's study of civil-military relations in Sierra Leone is also of little help. As the first comprehensive study of Sierra Leone's soldiers, Cox examines the activities of military men in politics and the imposition of "subjective control"⁷⁰ over what was hitherto regarded by the British as a non-political army. Whilst it should be stressed that the impact of the war did not constitute the major concern of these writers it should also be stated that despite the interest generated in this period of African history, very little research has been undertaken on Sierra Leone.

Methodology

The dearth of published materials on Sierra Leone during the First World War means that the research was based chiefly on primary (archival) sources. In spite of the wide, uneven and disparate nature of the evidence, the Sierra Leone National Archive holds valuable primary data and the Colonial Office despatches (though largely incomplete) as well as documents from the War Department illuminate the socio-economic, medical (health) and political impacts which inter alia precipitated the first post-war national crisis and turned an already disgruntled civilian population against what was regarded as an alien group - the Syrians.

The research draws on files relating to the Harbour, Local Matters, Customs, Foreign Affairs, the Railway, the Colonies, Agriculture, the West African Frontier Force, the Chamber of Commerce, the Commissioner of Police, the Food Committee and

the Medical Department, the Board of Trade, files from the office of the Secretary of State, the Sierra Leone Gazette, files relating to the Sanitary Department as well as Court Record books covering the period 1914-1920. For an examination of the impact of the war on the Protectorate, the reports and Minute Papers of the various District Commissioners proved invaluable; these relate to the Railway, Northern Sherbro, Sherbro, Karene, Koinadugu, Headquarter and Ronietta Districts.

The approach adopted is mainly thematic and interpretive and the aim is to examine broadly the impact of the war on the Colony and Protectorate from where the bulk of the soldiers and carriers were recruited. The limitations of the evidence in S. Leone necessitated (most of the relevant files stop at 1920) extensive research in London and documents at the Public Record Office were particularly helpful first for filling the yawning gaps in the Sierra material and secondly for corroborating rare material found in the Sierra Leone Archive.

Newspaper reports especially those from the Sierra Leone Weekly News the Colonial and Provincial Reporter, West Africa Magazine, the Sierra Leone Times and the Reformer, (only one disintegrating copy of this newspaper is in the Sierra Leone Archive) were also examined in order to show the general feelings of a populace whose unconditional loyalty to the war effort was hardly reciprocated by the bullying tactics of officialdom. Other government publications examined include Blue Books, Sierra Leone Annual Reports, Legislative Council Debates and Parliamentary Papers.

A basic limitation of the study is the lack of oral evidence so important for corroborating or refuting official viewpoints. This could be partly explained by the fact that no memoirs have been left behind by any of the recruits (soldiers and carriers) who took part in the African campaigns or in Mesopotamia. Many recruits like Kelfala Kamara, Abu Jalloh, Musa Kamara, Johnny Panguma, Ansumana Mandingo, Brima Kamara, Joe Mende, Fine Boy, Vamboi, Blackie, Tommy and Momoh Bangura were mainly uneducated Protectorate Africans who were uprooted from their groups by recruiting commissioners and loyal chiefs to fight the wars of the Whiteman. The passage of time may also have taken its toll on whatever stories they may have handed down to their children. These limitations compound the task of the historian wishing to reconstruct the problems facing demobilised soldiers and their relatives. We also know very little of their socio-economic backgrounds both before and after their experiences in the theatres of war. Further, very few reminiscences abound of the influenza pandemic which affected nearly every sphere of life in Freetown and the Protectorate. In the absence of what could be described as concrete oral evidence, resort was had to newspaper reports which reflected local responses and reactions to the war. But with a press mainly dominated by the educated Krio, the voice of the Protectorate African or the much despised Syrian was little heard.

Once war became inevitable in Europe the fortunes of Sierra Leone became inextricably tied up with that of the Allies. Certain themes are clearly discernible from a study of the

relevant documents and the thesis is accordingly divided into three parts. The military contribution of Sierra Leone to the war effort is crucial for an appreciation of the overall impact. Part 1 therefore examines the military build up in Sierra Leone as war clouds gathered in Europe and the initial destabilising effects on farming. In some cases the War Department found it necessary to appropriate lands (to make clearings for defence purposes as at Wilberforce and Kissy) and "articles of food."⁷¹ Both chapters in Part 1 examine the call to mobilisation and attempts by Africans to escape compulsion. Slaves were to use the occasion to make good their escape and enlist in the West African Frontier Force,⁷² much to the chagrin of chiefs. Ronnietta and Karene districts in particular supplied infantry and carriers for the Expeditionary Force in the Cameroons (by 1915 Ronnietta had supplied 700 carriers)⁷³ and because nearly all the W.A.F.F. was sent away, the garrison was manned by a volunteer force set up for the purpose in 1915.⁷⁴ The general impact on agriculture, labour and public works and the problems posed by demobilised soldiers in the Colony and Protectorate are also examined. The influx of returnees to the Colony was to cause serious problems of unemployment and many from the Cameroons worsened the problems of sanitation.

Although (as the Rev. Coker of St. Patrick's Church argued) "Africa finds herself" in the war "without her consent being first obtained"⁷⁵ many carriers were sent from Sierra Leone to German East Africa. Recruiting for the Corps caused serious problems for the administration but by September 1917, the undivided loyalty of chiefs such as Musa of Mano

and Boima in Bo⁷⁶ helped to secure 4,953 carriers to help Britain fight what had clearly become a "porter's war" in East Africa.⁷⁷ By December 1916 the War Office had concluded that West Africans were particularly suitable for work with the Inland Water Transport and the Royal Engineers in Mesopotamia. Many labourers from Sierra Leone supplied crews for large paddle and stern wheel steamers, motor launches and salvage barges. Whilst military recruitment and service overseas helped to reduce the crime rate in Freetown⁷⁸ it also exercised a baneful influence on agriculture as many able bodied men were taken away from farming.⁷⁹

Part 2 examines the impact of disease - the small pox epidemic of 1915-1916 and the influenza pandemic of 1918 - on the dependency. It provides some background to the insanitary conditions which made Sierra Leone so vulnerable to the spread of disease. Governor Wilkinson found the town characterised by filth and squalour; Sawpit steps - a very important landing place in the business quarter was "littered with filth" while sanitary officers wasted time "on petty bickering even where there is a smallpox epidemic to combat."⁸⁰ Problems of congestion⁸¹ in insanitary conditions and continued trade contacts with foreign countries like Guinea also aided the spread of disease.⁸²

Conditions in the Protectorate were far from satisfactory. Bonthe for example was characterised by "bad drainage, bad water, dusty streets" and "mosquitoes are abundant."⁸³ The vulnerability of the port of Freetown to steamers infected with diseases, the fact that vaccination was not compulsory

in Sierra Leone before 1916, the lack of medical officers during the war years and the failure of African therapy all did little to mitigate the spread of disease in 1916 and 1918.⁸⁴ Carriers from the Cameroons worsened the situation by introducing chickenpox in an already smallpox infected country.⁸⁵ These factors helped the smallpox epidemic to spread from French Guinea through Karene to Freetown. If smallpox threatened whole villages like Makolo to the east of Karene, dislocated farming and bred famine conditions in Susu-Limba country, the influenza epidemic of 1918 (apart from the alarming death toll and its negative effects on public works, education and agriculture) dislocated business and hindered progress in the oil palm industry.⁸⁶

Part 3 discusses the performance of the economy and the financial position of the country throughout the war years. It undertakes a detailed examination of the import and export trade, the general fortunes of revenue, the initial shocks at the outset of war and government's attempts to absorb these shocks at least up to December 1914. The dependency was very fortunate in having accumulated a substantial surplus in 1913. "The Colony" could therefore "contemplate with calmness a further call in 1915 on its ...balances."⁸⁷ If Governor Merewether was enthusiastic over revenue prospects for 1915, conditions by the beginning of the new year, pointed to a difficult future. Although by February the export trade in palm kernels was showing signs of resuming its earlier vitality, and though receipts from the railway had picked up from a little over £7,000 in September 1914 to over £13,500 in December of the same year and some

improvements made in the import trade, this hardly justified hopes that the estimates of £490,647 for 1915 "will be realised."⁸⁸ The revenue derived from trade returns, and other sources such as shipping, court fines and the House Tax, was not improving and by June 1915 the diminution in cash available for general purposes pointed to the need for financial stringency and increased duties on all exports except ale, beer, porter, cigars, cigarettes and unmanufactured tobacco.⁸⁹ Apart from the elimination of German trade, other factors combined to dislocate the import and export trade and the lack of shipping facilities compounded the situation all the more.

By September 1914 the trade in palm kernels was at a standstill. With prices at Liverpool standing at £15 to £16 a ton, a few purchases were being made in the Colony at £11.10s. so that the trader was left with a very small margin of profit after paying the increased charges for freight and insurance. Producers therefore held back their produce in anticipation of better prices.⁹⁰ The partial failure of the first rice crop in 1914 and the consequent diversion of the attention of producers to a second crop, the drift of labour towards road construction, the drastic fall in prices and the lack of machinery to extract the oil from the pericarp of the palm fruit, exercised "a baneful influence" on the expansion of the export trade in palm oil by 1915.⁹¹ Messrs Lever Brothers, established at Yonibana, were therefore forced by circumstances to give up their factory and to erect the plant in the Gold Coast.⁹² Conditions had not materially improved by 1918 and the irregularity of shipping activity, the

influenza epidemic, the early rains coupled with the very high cost of imported goods continued to worsen the situation.⁹³ Indeed the loss of German trade was to have serious consequences for revenue throughout the war.

The war years constituted a blessing in disguise for European firms (firms such as the Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Occidentale and Paterson Zochonis and Co)⁹⁴ in Sierra Leone. By 1916, the operations of a "Combine" of foreign firms had come to the notice of the Governor. Members of the Combine were making very large gains from "the commission paid on profits" by parent firms in London and local agents were "notoriously prosperous at present." The effects of the exploitative practices of the Combine were felt by producers who were compelled to accept very low prices for produce and at the same time pay very high prices for imported goods such as machets.⁹⁵ Within the context of a general economic decline, the government was compelled to abandon public works during the war -works such as the railway extension to Baga, the building of the new bay at Cline Town, the improvement of roads and drains in Freetown etc. - in order to effect savings in many directions.⁹⁶

Perhaps, the most useful way of appreciating the economic impact of the war on Sierra Leone is by comparing the nature of economic activity in the pre-war years and the war period. The chief variables which conditioned economic activity were unfavourable climatic conditions, the prohibition of certain imports like sugar from the United Kingdom,⁹⁷ the high tariff rates on spirits, the transfer of labour into the ranks of the Carrier Corps, the rather subtle methods of tax

evasion in the Protectorate, the strenuous efforts by the administration to secure revenue by raising taxes and by rehabilitating the Customs Preventive Service at Gene, Mano Salija and Sulima.

Through the use of statistical evidence based on trade returns it is shown that growth in revenue in 1918 did not indicate any widespread accumulation of wealth. By 1919 there was an artificial scarcity of basic commodities caused by hoarding and indiscriminate profiteering by local firms,⁹⁸ (like the S.C.O.A. which was charging very high prices for flour) Syrians⁹⁹ (such as Ali Rashid in Moyamba who was convicted for inflating the price of rice) and chiefs who extorted rice and produce from their subjects.¹⁰⁰ These factors produced a volatile situation and contributed to rural and urban radicalism in 1919.

Alongside the general economic malaise was the problem of rice and food. The last chapter traces the history of rice from the pre-war years through the war period. This approach is important for an appreciation of the factors which led to the anti-Syrian riots in 1919. The evidence shows that the history of rice hitherto was characterised by dearth and the famine of 1910 was the precursor of the shortages between 1914 and 1919. The dependence on rice as the staple diet and the failure to find alternatives in the pre-war period made it so difficult for the population to adjust to conditions of scarcity during the war.¹⁰¹ This chapter looks at the practice of selling rice over the frontier to French Guinea and official policy towards rice and food on the eve of war and during the war years.

Official policy included arrangements for procuring supplies of preserved meat, biscuits, groceries and dried vegetables from England. In the event of war rice brought down the Scarries river for export was to be commandeered and merchants were requested to maintain stocks of rice and flour to meet the needs of the government in any emergency.¹⁰² The war period itself was characterised by compulsory purchases of rice and a lack of protection for the producer against the poor prices offered by merchants. By July 1915 for example the total cost of rice to General Dobell in the Cameroons was £1,572.¹⁰³

Many factors affected the production and availability of rice during the war years. These included poor rainfall and climatic variations, problems of transportation as in Northern Sherbro where the Sumbuya rivers were not navigable throughout the year, labour shortages and the influenza epidemic. By 1917 the shortage of machets for cultivation worsened the fortunes of the rice crop¹⁰⁴ and the lesser imports of rice from August 1914 coupled with the reimposition of duties on foodstuffs in November 1915 affecting bread, butter, and salt merely exacerbated the food situation.¹⁰⁵ Rice collection during the war became a yardstick for measuring chiefly loyalty to officialdom. If its plentiful supply at the outset of war brought the government and people together, the later shortages were to sever that connection in 1919.

The food problem was not mitigated by the scramble for sugar and the lack of meat and fish,¹⁰⁶ and the population resented

the prices fixed by the Food Committee.¹⁰⁷ By July 1919 many chiefs, traders, Europeans and Syrians were guilty of hoarding rice and other foodstuffs, widespread extortion and attempts to cheat consumers by the use of illegal measures.¹⁰⁸ These problems were compounded by the famine of 1919 and the serious administrative lapses in the distribution of rice provided the triggers for urban and rural violence in post-war Sierra Leone.

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CHAPTER 2: THE MILITARY EXPERIENCE

In March 1920, Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy was to declare in the House of Commons that "plenty of histories of the war have been written already by private people and why the government should go into this business I cannot for the life of me understand."¹ But the evidence then and now, would show that "the public have heard very little of" the "appalling hardships"² endured by African soldiers in World War I. This chapter therefore eschews familiar approaches which merely focus on the fighting exploits of African combatants in the various theatres of war. Rather, it is argued that the African soldier's involvement in the war was far more complex than the expulsion of the Germans from Mbureku³ in the Cameroons or the crossing of the Rufiji valley in East Africa.⁴

The deployment of Sierra Leoneans as combatants, carriers and labourers in Togoland, the Cameroons, German East Africa and Mesopotamia, constituted an "experience" which has been given casual treatment by historians. Nowhere is this more evident than in recent studies by Abraham and Turay,⁵ Peter Clarke⁶ and Farwell.⁷ Because "there is much that is unknown..." about the experience of Africans in World War I, this chapter examines the fortunes of Sierra Leone's soldiers in a war that was destined to render "our condition more and more distressing to think on."⁸

THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR I

When in 1897, Chamberlain decided to amalgamate the disparate military and police forces in former British West Africa into one corporate body, the West African Frontier Force, little did he realise that the composite battalions would be used in any crisis involving the great powers. The Sierra Leone Battalion W.A.F.F. was constituted in 1901⁹ and thereafter took over the functions of the former Frontier Police.¹⁰ Its role then involved support for the civil administration "for which purpose a number of troops are locked up in obligatory garrisons," the provision of a striking force to quell internal risings and the rendering of assistance to other British colonies in West Africa.¹¹ The need to preserve Britain's interests in the interior influenced colonial thinking greatly so that in 1903, the battalion was engaged in containing numerous Kissi raids from Liberia; the objective was also to forestall any French expansion in order to "restore the confidence of the people."¹²

Born of the need for contingency,¹³ the W.A.F.F. was designed to help shore-up Britain's huge imperial structure¹⁴ in Africa. The colonies themselves were to act as a great reserve of manpower that could be mobilised in case of war and the primary job of the W.A.F.F. was "imperial policing" and fighting "small wars" on the far flung frontiers of empire.¹⁵ In Sierra Leone in particular, the battalion was set up¹⁶ in view of the rapidly declining prestige and reputation of the West Indian Regiment and the Frontier Police. At a time when the Anglo-French dispute over the Niger was at its height, Freetown, then a naval depot and

coaling station with batteries constructed for its defence,¹⁷ had to be protected against an assumed French threat. French penetration south eastwards from Futa Jallon, was threatening to give rise to frontier disputes, hence the need for a force to patrol the frontier road from Kambia on the Scarcies in the north to the Mano river in the south east.¹⁸

Apart from strategic considerations, the internecine trade wars that characterised the hinterland in the late 19th century¹⁹ and the threat posed to British trading establishments, were to make the need for the battalion all the more urgent even before the declaration of the Protectorate in 1896.²⁰ The battalion was therefore to act as a "guarantee of security to the inhabitants" and "a safeguard against lawlessness, oppression and the traffic in slaves."²¹

In a context in which military roles came to overlap with police functions²² (such as the provision of gaol guards, escorts, and orderlies to District Commissioners) the men incorporated into the battalion from the Frontier Police had little combat experience apart from the Ashanti campaign of 1900.²³ Governed by local ordinances which specified the applicability of the Army Act, and provided for general service, their employment in expeditionary forces outside Africa was never regarded as a likely contingency before World War I.²⁴ They were distributed, maintained and trained for African risings and disturbances and the question of defence against European-directed invasion or an offensive against European-owned territories had never been seriously

contemplated.

The efficiency of the battalion was determined by its success in quelling internal risings and by its performance in bush warfare. The force lacked any machinery for expansion and much reliance could not be placed on reservists. Unlike East Africa which was more exposed to internal troubles and external aggression, and to where troops from India could be despatched to contain problems "beyond the capacity of the King's African Rifles," there was no source other than the United Kingdom (except Nigeria, the Gold Coast or Gibraltar) or an imperial garrison from which the battalion could have been reinforced.²⁵

The military history of the period immediately preceding the outbreak of war was closely connected with the suppression of internal disorders. In 1912 for example, a company of the W.A.F.F. from Tesani, was deployed to quell disturbances in Sandoh chiefdom, Kono sub-district. So grave was the crisis that another company of the West African Regiment had to be held in readiness.²⁶ By January 1912, the battalion was 453 strong with a reserve force of 87, and using M.L. and M.E. rifles. The full complement however required for the reserve force was 250.²⁷ By December 1912, the actual strength of the battalion was 498 with a reserve force of 83 at Daru.²⁸

Internal developments in 1913 necessitated significant increases in the battalion, from four to six companies,²⁹ B Company being stationed at Gbangbama to contain the activities of the Human Leopard Society³⁰ in Imperri. The

increase was designed to meet the protracted emergency in Kono³¹ and to maintain peace on Sierra Leone's frontier with Liberia.³² In 1913 therefore the establishment comprised six companies (685 O.R.'s) and ten machine gun carriers. The average length of service was reduced from 4 years five months, to three years two months; but the high percentage of Mende recruits (36%) was already beginning to arouse serious concern in official circles. One company was therefore stationed near the terminus of the branch railway from Bauya to Makump in order to secure more Temne recruits.

As half of the men came from the "bush field," they demonstrated an intimate knowledge of bush fighting but lack of open space precluded them from attaining a high standard in extended order formation. Though the general stamp of recruits was "very level," there was too much preoccupation with fatigue work.³³ By January 1914 the Temne complement had increased from 147 in 1913 to 160, but Mende dominance (259) in the ranks was still evident.³⁴

As war clouds gathered over Europe, a review of colonial and imperial forces began in Sierra Leone. Between February and March 1914, five companies of the West African Regiment were moved from Karene to the Peninsula to take part in manoeuvres.³⁵ The cutting of many roads at Signal Hill and Wilberforce in 1910, had signalled the commencement of improvements in communications to defend Freetown's harbour in war time³⁶ and by April 1914, plans were in hand to improve the rifle range at Kortright to facilitate more extensive practice in field firing.³⁷ Two months before the

declaration of war, the strength of the force was 675 O.R.s and 10 machine-gun carriers, the drop being due to the problems entailed in securing sufficient Temne recruits, 52 discharges and 28 desertions. The reserve force was still far below strength (85); only 55 men came forward for training.

Musketry practices were far from satisfactory because of the lack of magazine rifles and the continued use of the Martini-Metford carbine. Even among the O.R.s, there were "too many third class...shots."³⁸ The preceding observations are crucial for an understanding of the controversy which came to surround the performance of Sierra Leone's soldiers in the Cameroons.

As war became inevitable, Merewether commenced mobilisation on 30th July (in accordance with the precautionary stage of the Defence Scheme³⁹). All companies of the W.A.F.F. at outstations were removed to Daru; two companies were sent to Songo Town,⁴⁰ and the policy of examining ships was enforced on 1st August 1914.⁴¹ Due to the strained relations with Germany, Merewether was required to guard against the possibility of attack in "advance of any formal declaration of war."⁴² By 4th August, mobilisation was practically complete and only two companies of the West African Regiment were yet to move from the Protectorate.⁴³ At the outbreak of war, the garrison in Sierra Leone comprised six companies of the W.A.F.F., 12 companies of the West African Regiment, four companies of the West Indian Regiment and a company of the Royal Garrison Artillery.



The declaration of war with Germany soon led to the speedy internment of all German subjects - reservists, naval engineers and marines.⁴⁴ Even the German Consul Herr O. Lebzin was ordered to leave the Colony at the earliest opportunity.⁴⁵ German shipping activity in Sierra Leone was also brought to a halt by the seizure of all vessels and craft belonging to the Woermann Linie Shipping Company to prevent them "being used...for a hostile purpose."⁴⁶ Only missionaries were allowed freedom on condition that they did not engage in any "act hostile to the government" and because most of them (Alsations and Poles) were found to be "rabidly anti-German..."⁴⁷

As far back as 1909, the Committee of Imperial Defence had argued in favour of expelling "aliens of enemy nationality" from important naval bases in war time or adopting some system of "registration or observation" over them elsewhere.⁴⁸ Though technically enemy subjects of the Ottoman Turks, the difficulties anticipated in interning all males of military age, led General Daniell to recommend the latter course in relation to the Syrians. Syrians could only leave Freetown or the Protectorate with the consent of the Commissioner of Police, the "better" and "wealthiest" class being held responsible "for the good behaviour of their countrymen." Their letters were to be censored and defaulters immediately arrested.⁴⁹ In accordance with a memorandum from the Overseas Defence Committee, Merewether established the censorship of all postal matter on 8th August and appointed Messrs R.F. Honter and Davies as Assistant Censors.⁵⁰ With the above precautionary measures thus taken, the

administration turned its attention to Dobell's repeated requests for troops in the Cameroons.

RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

The demands of the Cameroon Expeditionary Force were to stretch the patience of the Governor to the full. Harcourt's request for four companies of the W.A.F.F., four companies of the West African Regiment and two 2.95 millimetre quick firing⁵¹ guns meant important modifications of the approved Defence Scheme. Apprehensive over the uneasiness generated in the wake of mobilisation and a possible "sea attack combined with landing operations," and haunted by fears of a "native rising" approximating the scale of 1898, both Merewether and the G.O.C. Daniell were to warn against denuding the garrison.⁵² If Merewether's fears were predicated on the reluctance of the Colonial Office to use imperial troops in the absence of colonial troops in the event of any "factional outbreaks,"⁵³ there was every possibility that the Germans might use Liberia (the headquarters of the German West African Cable, connecting Pernambuco and Tenerife) as a base of attack against Sierra Leone. Germany's economic leverage in Liberia and their attempts at "inculcating their nationality...into the inhabitants of the Republic"⁵⁴ meant that the situation warranted careful attention.

By 17th August however, all apprehensions had been allayed and the demand for human and material resources on Sierra Leone became more urgent. Merewether was required to despatch to Lome "when the naval situation permits," two

companies of the W.A.F.F., two machine guns, 500 small rounds of ammunition (5,000 rounds for each machine gun) 300 carriers with headmen, medical staff with stores, hammocks and tents for officers and a total of six weeks supplies for Europeans (four for Africans) in addition to rations for the voyage.⁵⁵ On the 18th, Merewether was further requested to prepare 1,200 carriers and headmen, one month's supply of food for Europeans and Africans, and the necessary sea transport to the Cameroons.⁵⁶

August 1914 was a trying month for the administration for apart from supplying troops, Sierra Leone was a supply base for arms and ammunition to the forces in Togo. On 23rd August when C and E companies left for Togoland,⁵⁷ the O.C. Troops, Lome, was requesting double common shrapnel shells with fuses for 2.95" guns. On the⁵⁸ same day, the War Office approved the transfer of 1,500,000 rounds of Mark VI small arms ammunition from the imperial troops in Sierra Leone to Togo.⁵⁹ By 25th August, Daniell had already supplied 500 rounds of quick-firing gun ammunition to Lagos and 300 rounds to Lome.⁶⁰ At the start of the campaigns in the Cameroons, Dobell had 4,300 West African troops at his disposal⁶¹ but by September, his further requests for one officer, 20 N.C.O.'s and men from the Royal Garrison Artillery, four companies of infantry with signallers, 1,000 carriers with headmen and medical staff and 1,000 rounds of gun ammunition,⁶² were to arouse apprehensions once more about the dangers of reducing the garrison to a minimum.⁶³

In October 100 carriers were despatched from Kenema to

Freetown⁶⁴ and Dobell requested one more doctor, a nurse and three dressers.⁶⁵ The only potential threat to Sierra Leone then was the extensive use of mining in home waters by the Germans⁶⁶ which led to fears that the same would be done in bases used by British and Allied naval forces; the spread of false reports by a Mr Brunner, an agent of the Societe Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain, of German successes and imminent defeat of the Allies,⁶⁷ (obviously, "...la societe...parait etre sous l'influence Allemande⁶⁸) and the, albeit unsubstantiated rumours that a German ship "Karlsruhe," anchored near Cape Verde, "was obtaining wood and fuel from the natives."⁶⁹

By 25th December 1914 the number of colonial and imperial troops from Sierra Leone serving in the Cameroons, was 1,206 including officers; thereafter 407 more were despatched to the Cameroons,⁷⁰ but when Dobell pressed for more troops in January 1915, Merewether replied that the only force available for suppressing disorders in the Protectorate, were "undisciplined and untrained Court Messengers."⁷¹ Mr Baynes regarded this as "the usual cry of wolf which one always expects and gets" from the governor,⁷² but this did not deter Dobell from pressing for the enlistment of every suitable recruit for the W.A.F.F.⁷³ in order to make good the wastage in the unit.⁷⁴ It was difficult however to achieve this in West Africa since, as it was argued, "the majority of the...races are not suitable materials to make soldiers of," and because only 10% of the estimated population of West Africa (19,400,000) were considered "eligible males." In Sierra Leone, a regular recruiting campaign was begun; special bonuses were offered and recruiting bands sent round

the likely districts. The result "just" enabled the Colonial Office "to fill the gaps in our forces...and keep a small margin over."⁷⁵

The recruitment drive in 1915 was fraught with serious problems. British West African colonies and Protectorates were thinly populated and it was hard to find groups whose favourite occupation was fighting. Even celebrated resisters to the initial European thrust (like the Temnes, Mendes and Asante) were beginning to exhibit a "special dislike for military discipline;" and while in peace time it was very difficult "to keep...local forces up to normal establishment," any recruitment drive had to consider the likely problem of reducing the garrison "below a certain number."⁷⁶ By February however, Ronietta had provided a total of 700 carriers for the Expeditionary Force. So "keen" were the men to enlist, that when the District Commissioner informed others that "no more labourers were required many walked from Moyamba to Freetown - a distance of about 80 miles in the hope of being engaged."⁷⁷ During the same period, "many hundred carriers" were supplied by the Railway district.⁷⁸

Throughout 1915 the chiefs in Ronietta continued to provide Mende and Temne volunteers as carriers and "the cheerful and manly characteristics of the Mende people call for admiration,"⁷⁹ but the efforts of recruiting commissioners in Koinadugu met with "practically no response" as the people there lacked "the adventurous disposition of the Mendes."⁸⁰ It is very difficult to determine the extent of compulsion in

Sierra Leone but by March 1915, Major Jenkins was suggesting that all District Commissioners were to help "catch recruits,"⁸¹ this at a time when conscription had been extended to the "Four Communes" in Senegal.⁸²

In order to overcome the problems associated with recruitment in 1915, the O.C. Details, W.A.F.F., Daru, enlisted 10 men "...to let the natives see that recruiting has not stopped altogether."⁸³ With fears of Mende dominance still in the ranks, it was decided to locate a skeleton depot at Daru, "which the natives have become accustomed" to associating "in their minds with the W.A.F.F.;"⁸⁴ but Temnes were showing "a disinclination to enlist out of their own country."⁸⁵

Of the 65 men wounded in the Sierra Leone Battalion up to June 1915, 52 were likely to be subsequently fit for service. Dobell therefore urged the enlistment of 100 more men to replace casualties and those likely to be discharged as "time-expired" men at the end of hostilities,⁸⁶ this at a time when Britain was determined to commit more men to the front by offering pardon to all deserters from the regular forces.⁸⁷ Dobell's requests intensified in July⁸⁸ and by August, recruitment was being pursued with greater vigour; 27 out of 134 recruits had passed their musketry training⁸⁹ and more reservists were reporting for training. Daniell therefore urged that an additional officer be sent to Daru to help the two already there.⁹⁰

Clearly the almost feverish call for reinforcements between August 1914 and July 1915 was a function of heightened

engagements at Pitti, Kompina, Harman's Farm, Bare, Mbureku, Mbenga, Jabassi, Kwakwa Creek, Mojanga, Kribi, Nkongsamba and Duala in the Cameroons.⁹¹ Between 3rd September and 14th October 1915, 102 recruits were despatched as reinforcements to the Cameroons⁹² and in December, 90 more proceeded to Duala, "a good many recruits now offering themselves."⁹³ Thereafter the fortunes of the battalion were tied up with the capture of the last German stronghold at Yaounde on 1st January 1916 until the Germans were forced to retreat in a south easterly direction towards Spanish Guinea. Assembled at Duala on 2nd February, the entire battalion arrived in Freetown on 26th and 29th April 1916 after twenty months in the Cameroons.⁹⁴

Since their arrival in Freetown the future of the battalion was to be dominated by great controversy regarding its performance and though the Colonial Office was reluctant to employ them in any future combat capacity, their fate was to be determined by events in East Africa. By June 1916, the Allies were determined to wind up the campaign in German East Africa and since prolonged bush-fighting was anticipated in the southern part of the country, they were anxious to secure West African troops given the impossibility of any more recruiting from Portuguese East Africa.⁹⁵ Sierra Leone and the Gambia however could offer no help and recourse was therefore had to Nigeria⁹⁶ (for raising four battalions of 500 men each with a four gun battery) and the Gold Coast which sent 900 men to East Africa in July.⁹⁷

Between October and November 1916, the position of the Allies

in East Africa had become desperate and the Sub-Committee on Imperial Defence recommended a "resolute offensive with an adequate force." Indian troops were proving very unreliable; many had resorted to self-mutilation and others succumbed easily to the hazards of "malaria and debility." In revenge for having been denied permission by Britain to invade German East Africa from Rhodesia, the Belgians refused to assume the offensive north of Lake Tanganyika.⁹⁸ With an anticipated monthly wastage of 15%, reinforcements were needed for the Nigerian contingent, and with Lugard pleading that his garrison had been reduced to below "safety point," attention once more turned to Sierra Leone.⁹⁹

The Colonial Office was desperate to avoid all criticisms "that we are obstructive because we suggest that there are difficulties."¹⁰⁰ Above all, Britain needed to determine the strength of troops to be maintained in its own possession in the Cameroons, pending a more definite division of the country with the French. Brigadier-General Maurice's suggestion to recruit a force from ex-German soldiers in the Cameroons had been abandoned by 16th November.¹⁰¹ Because of their comparative wealth, it was proving very difficult to enlist the Asante during the cocoa season.¹⁰² Mr Fiddian therefore recommended the use of two companies of the Sierra Leone Battalion either as garrison forces in Nigeria thereby releasing trained troops for service in East Africa, as combatants in East Africa itself, or as relief for the Gambia company which could then be sent to East Africa.¹⁰³ The spectre of "native risings" in Nigeria was to underscore the need for Sierra Leone troops for garrison duties especially

at a time when, (as the Army Council argued) Nigerian troops needed rest and recuperation.¹⁰⁴

By November 1916, the War Office was bent on raising additional African units for service in theatres where "climatic conditions are favourable." Attention had turned albeit unsuccessfully, to the "fighting races of South Africa" and the idea of raising additional troops in East Africa itself had been entertained, but levies were also to be raised from countries not hitherto mentioned and that included Sierra Leone as well.¹⁰⁵ The need to maintain the contingents already supplied by the garrisons of West Africa (3,900) was finally to lead to the Haywood mission to West Africa in December 1916.

As Director of Recruiting, Haywood was to raise recruits in West Africa for service overseas as well as efficient forces for operations in tropical or sub-tropical climates, or for garrison work thereby setting more suitable troops free for service in the field.¹⁰⁶ Although it was official policy to restrict West African troops to African theatres of war due to their alleged inability for example, to withstand non-tropical climates and the difficulties entailed in maintaining them in distant theatres,¹⁰⁷ Haywood was now to consider the possibility of raising units or drafts suitable in terms of efficiency, length of time required for training, the possibility of providing officers and N.C.O.'s, for service in either Europe, the Near East, Mesopotamia, East Africa, Somaliland, and for suppressing internal risings in West Africa.¹⁰⁸

The major problem with the Haywood mission centred around the difficulty of securing suitable officers and N.C.O.'s with West African experience. The War Office tried to release some from the Expeditionary Force in France, but the demand was mainly for company commanders and subalterns. Those officers who had held these posts in West Africa three years previously were, by the beginning of 1917 commanding battalions and could not be ordered back.¹⁰⁹

In spite of the urgency of the situation, the Colonial Office was soon caught up in a thorny debate involving the suitability of the Sierra Leone Battalion even for garrison work. In August 1916, Lieutenant-Colonel Hastings had advised against enlisting men for service outside their colonies as was done by the French.¹¹⁰ The proposal that the battalion could be used as garrison troops in Northern Nigeria was to generate a flood of negative reports about Sierra Leone's soldiers.

Despised by Nigerian troops because they were paid higher rates, it was alleged that they were "likely to cause trouble by crime against person or property ..." Lieutenant-Colonel Cunliffe and Acting-Governor Boyle therefore suggested that they be deployed for garrison work in Southern Nigeria or the Cameroons¹¹¹ but it would seem that the battalion and men of the West African Regiment had been found wanting. This major Beattie attributed to "lack of courage not lack of ordinary discipline..."¹¹²

Mr Ellis found such reports a "mystery" particularly so when the Gambia Company, "one of the best units," was recruited from the same groups in Sierra Leone,¹¹³ but Lugard was most scathing in his denunciation of the battalion. Though no evidence abounds to support even the mildest of his claims Lugard charged them with "murder and rape" in the Cameroons, and alleged that even Dobell had problems with them. Deeply apprehensive of the Temnes and Mendes, Lugard argued that "outside their own country where they are restrained by tribal jujus," they "constantly commit crimes and atrocities on natives." The battalion was therefore to be held as a reserve force for local disturbances in Nigeria or the Gold coast.¹¹⁴

Colonel Hastings was however more objective in his appraisal of Sierra Leone's soldiers. Doubtful of the Mendes and Temnes, he could not "call his geese swans" because they had "no stomach for fighting and although...they would be alright against their own people armed with Dane guns" he doubted whether they would be of any use against a foe with modern weapons."¹¹⁵ Major Thurston, C.O. Gambia Company also found that his "Mende men" "...got very tired of active service before the end of the Cameroon operations,"¹¹⁶ but Hastings was still confident that the battalion was suitable for garrison duties in Nigeria and the Cameroons. He vouched that the Mendes and Temnes were "a quiet and docile people" and that he had never before heard that they were "atrocities committing." Together with Colonel Haywood, he refuted allegations that General Dobell had had trouble with them except for their lack of courage.¹¹⁷ Mr Fiddian himself

doubted allegations about "their Hunnish propensities."

By December 1916, there was a desire to prosecute the campaign in East Africa with greater vigour and the question of deploying the battalion soon became wedded to the complications involved in administering occupied Togoland and the need for maintaining a military administration there. Governor Clifford (Gold Coast) urged that the Gold Coast company in Togo be released for further service in East Africa and be replaced by a police force.¹¹⁸ The Colonial Office was clearly in a dilemma; were they to withdraw the Gold Coast Company from Togo, it was bound to endanger their legal position there. Mr. Risley had warned against "anything implying civil control or annexation" as this would provide a pretext for Germany to annex Belgium, Poland and part of France. Further it would lead the Togolese to believe that "the whiteman was beaten" and had to take the soldiers away to fight in East Africa.¹¹⁹

The major question which arose was whether it was necessary to keep regular troops in Togo to maintain a military administration. It was therefore agreed that the police force - "a force of all sorts...of about 40 or 50" should do as garrison for international law purposes.¹²⁰ What was important, it was argued, was the maintenance of order in Togoland for the French "can scarcely tell whether we keep or do not keep any soldiers" there. Were they to discover it, it was hoped the War Office would lend the Colonial Office a company of the West African Regiment in Sierra Leone.¹²¹ Major Rew even suggested that the Gold Coast Company could be

replaced by a good company of Temne recruits from the Sierra Leone Battalion, and he found the Gold Coast Regiment just as guilty of "rape, murder and looting in Togoland."¹²² Contrary to Lugard's charges, Dobell could recall no breaches of discipline among the troops whilst in the Cameroons.¹²³

In January 1917 when the Sierra Leone Battalion numbered 726 O.R.'s,¹²⁴ the march of the Senusi column on Tawa and Madowa and the threat posed to the northern frontier of Nigeria led Lugard to request all available troops and field guns from Sierra Leone.¹²⁵ These were to be drawn from the battalion and the West African Regiment which he had hitherto condemned. The available evidence shows that Sierra Leone was not peculiar in furnishing allegedly poor infantry material. Haywood in May 1917, argued that the desire to raise a "million Black Army" in West Africa was founded on clearly fictitious ideas about the recruiting possibilities in British West Africa.¹²⁶ By 1933, the War Office was coming to grips with this fact having learnt their lesson from the Germans who "differentiated carefully," recruiting soldiers only from certain groups and securing porters and unskilled labour from others.¹²⁷

In Sierra Leone, recruitment was not carried out for Colonial forces only and a consideration, albeit very briefly, of the place of imperial troops¹²⁸ in the whole process is crucial for an understanding of the overall impact of recruitment. The West African Regiment strongly relied on District Commissioners and Moslem priests for assistance during recruiting tours such as those in the Moyamba-Mano

district¹²⁹ and Kabala¹³⁰ in January and February 1915 respectively. Considerably under strength in September 1915, D.C.'s came under tremendous pressure to secure 50 recruits from Moslem and Temne groups only,¹³¹ but responses from Karene and Ronietta Districts were unsatisfactory, most recruits being rejected because of heart troubles.¹³² By December however, 100 men had been assembled at Daru.¹³³ After their collaborative effort with the Sierra Leone battalion in Nigeria, one company, whilst acting as garrison troops in the Gambia in March 1917, assisted the French in capturing the murderers of the chef de port at Selety.¹³⁴

Established in 1889, the Royal Garrison Artillery with 82 O.R.'s and six 2.95" q.f. mountain guns were to be very instrumental in operations at Jabbassi, the Northern Railways and Kribbi in the Cameroons.¹³⁵ Yet perhaps their most valuable contribution to the war effort was the construction of field works, the improvements effected at gun positions and defences at Bare¹³⁶ and the heroic defence against the Germans at Dschang.¹³⁷ Much of the effort of the 36th Company, Royal Engineers revolved around construction work and the building of replacements for field guns. By 8th October 1914, they were constructing roads down the west branch of the Pitti river and on the 21st, repaired broken rails for the advance on Edea.

Their services were particularly valuable in using the railway for attacks and retreat. After constructing coffins for French soldiers on 25th October, the company erected defences for the naval gun to defend their camp at Logbatchek

from any enemy advance.¹³⁸ Between November 1915 and February 1916 when the company reached Kribbi, they facilitated the advance of the 4.5 inch Howitzer, constructed small bridges, rafts and drifts and repaired and strengthened existing bridges. The company was to find these latter tasks particularly tedious at Dschangmangas and Loldorf with Major Cole's column.¹³⁹

Responses to recruiting parties particularly in the northern districts of Sierra Leone were not always positive. As recruitment interfered with farming in Kabala, many family heads advised their sons not to enlist.¹⁴⁰ The experience of recruiting commissioners would show that chiefs were always willing to provide men from October upwards when they were not engaged on their farms.¹⁴¹ At a time when the allies suffered their first defeat at Jabassi,¹⁴² the difficulties entailed in providing guards for prisoners of war were to be inextricably tied up with the supply of manpower¹⁴³ to the Cameroons. Recruits were simply not forthcoming. Despite their manifestations of a combatant spirit under their war chief Kafura,¹⁴⁴ the Kissi by 1915 were proving very difficult to train.¹⁴⁵

By January 1915, the stresses and dislocation caused by recruitment were beginning to manifest themselves even among the Mende, 200 of whom crossed the Liberian boundary into Monrovia to escape being called up for service.¹⁴⁶ The problems encountered in fulfilling Dobell's requests were further complicated by the wrangling between the Colonial Office and the War Office for control of the Sierra Leone

Battalion in war time. At the root of the conflict was the fear that the G.O.C. would merely promote the interests of the West African Regiment.¹⁴⁷

In April 1915, Merewether had to appeal to the good services of the Mende headman, George Cummings to meet Dobell's request for 500 carriers. Cummings was to exploit the situation to advantage to enrich himself for as Heslip (Commissioner of Police) suspected, he was "at the bottom of the chiefs not being able to procure the men" initially.¹⁴⁸ If the recruitment drive begun in August was severely checked by the dearth of officers, by November 1915 the supply of men for carrier service from Freetown and the surrounding districts had been exhausted.¹⁴⁹ Karene had to be excluded because of a smallpox outbreak and the same was true of Mafwe in Railway District and Mano in Ronietta.¹⁵⁰

The recruiting ground was further limited by the rather poor results of musketry training among the reserve force. Many men failed to come up on time and many hitherto discharged on grounds of misconduct and as "medically unfit" tried to re-enlist hoping they would not be recognised because the battalion was away.¹⁵¹ On the whole, the incentive to enlist was not predicated on any warlike abilities. As Mr Ellis rightly conceded, the "W.A.F.F. rank and file are mercenary troops; the pay is what mainly brings them into the force..."¹⁵²

By the end of the Cameroon campaign, a great deal of controversy had come to surround the performance of the

Sierra Leone soldier but the much vaunted arguments about his inefficiency show a failure to appreciate the realities of the problems which colonial and imperial forces had to contend with. The Royal Garrison Artillery for instance, suffered due to the failure to constitute an establishment of gun carriers¹⁵³ and because the 2.95" guns had never been repaired before the war, they failed to come into action at Bagam and the river Nun.¹⁵⁴ Though they were "loyal and willing," the hasty provision of 312 "untrained carriers" for the battery was seen as the equivalent of giving "the Officer Commanding a Battery of R.H.A. a mixture of cab horses and Dartmoor ponies on his way to the Western Front..."¹⁵⁵ Perhaps the most significant drawback was the lack of boots among the Regiment.¹⁵⁶ By 10th July 1915, many were attending hospital due to bad feet. The continuous rain and damp aggravated sickness among the men with an average of 80 reporting sick daily due to colds, rheumatism and sometimes smallpox.¹⁵⁷

Clearly, allegations of incompetence against the men were never as widespread as Lugard wanted Colonial officials to believe. On the contrary, breaches of discipline were confined to a few soldiers only, such as privates 2791 Fine Boy, E Coy, W.A.R., and 3151 Soriba Temne, B Coy who were tried by a Field General Court Martial for leaving his post before being relieved and for sleeping whilst in active service at Nkongsamba, respectively.¹⁵⁸ If the men of the Sierra Leone Battalion suffered from a "loss of confidence," it was partly a function of the failure to place additional officers at the disposal of Colonel Newstead.¹⁵⁹ Above all,

during the attack on Yaounde in June 1915, the vagaries of the weather, a combination of sickness among the column and Belgian inaction from the Congo, forced a withdrawal to Ngwe on the Kele river and resulted in the death of Private Lamina Conteh II of C Company.

Throughout, the battalion operated in country covered by dense tropical forest which favoured the defensive tactics of the Germans. Whilst restricting their movement, it limited the strength of advancing columns, rendered the enemy invisible and exposed them to sudden bursts of fire. This blind warfare meant constant watchfulness and self control which imposed a severe strain on nerves already weakened by the trying climate.¹⁶⁰ Yet Dobell was very impressed by a group of men "to whom no day appears to be too long;" by men "endowed with a constitution which inures them to hardship" and by carriers who were very "patient and willing in the most difficult conditions..."¹⁶¹ Wilkinson's view that Sierra Leone was of little value in the supply of troops due to the "unwarlike character...of its tribes," does not therefore adequately explain the true picture of the country's contribution to the war effort.¹⁶²

THE IMPACT OF RECRUITMENT

The tensions and apprehensions generated in the wake of mobilisation, had serious consequences for the public, the administration, the troops themselves and the Colonial Office. By September 1914, the appropriation of lands by the War Department for war purposes had caused much damage to property and compensation had to be offered to claimants at

Kissy and Wilberforce.¹⁶³ In the Protectorate, the withdrawal of troops and the closure of some trading establishments bred fears of a possible punitive expedition by the government against the Mendes or Temnes¹⁶⁴ and this reinforced rumours of imminent civil commotion in the Railway District.¹⁶⁵

Generally, the despatch of troops and the need to keep many trains under steam day and night, crippled railway traffic considerably and reduced receipts for August 1914.¹⁶⁶ If 1915 was a bad year for dodging the draft in Guinea,¹⁶⁷ the results of recruitment missions organised in Sierra Leone in the same period were equally counter productive, forcing a wave of emigration from the Protectorate. Merewether was therefore advised to "prevent ...the exodus of natives, which the arrival of recruiting commissioners might provoke...amongst the tribes...near the boundary..."¹⁶⁸

Due to the massive build up of troops, military demands for rice in Duala were to exert severe pressures on the authorities in Freetown and aggravated the problem of shortage.¹⁶⁹ In February 1915, 220,081 lbs of rice were shipped to the Cameroons;¹⁷⁰ Ronietta provided 3,471 tons, the Railway District 318,¹⁷¹ but so acute was the problem of shortage that the authorities found it difficult to feed recruits awaiting transportation to Duala.¹⁷² Troop movements after their return from the Cameroons - from Freetown via Mabanta to Wongkufu - were to impinge significantly on the already depleted supplies in a year of partial famine (1916)¹⁷³ In the Railway District, "levies of

rice were made" to meet the demands of returnees. Because the process of mobilisation entailed heavy expenditure, the government was forced to draw on its reserve, releasing cash that was held by the Bank of British West Africa "as and when it was found essential to meet military requirements."¹⁷⁵

Against the background of a very gloomy financial outlook for 1916,¹⁷⁶ the total expenditure on the Expeditionary Force up to July 1915 was £9786/3/5;¹⁷⁷ by February 1916, returnees were making heavy demands on the already limited reserve of silver coins the bulk of which had been sent to the Gold Coast and England, and as the G.O.C. apprehended trouble in paying carriers and troops in notes, he requested £50,000 from the Currency Board "as soon as possible."¹⁷⁸

A significant by-product of recruitment was the spread of disease. In Freetown, mobilisation meant stationing many troops in the war stations (instead of at Tower Hill) which harboured the chief sources of malarial fever.¹⁷⁹ Apart from introducing chicken pox from the Cameroons, Indian troops infected Sierra Leone carriers with Benign Tertian malarial fever. Dysentery itself received a fresh stimulus among thousands of carriers and Dr Young, then in charge of the Base hospital at Duala attributed this to the association with Indian troops.¹⁸⁰ In the Expeditionary Force, 6 men of the Sierra Leone Battalion¹⁸¹ and 17 in the West African Regiment¹⁸² succumbed to disease for although in 1915 the War Office made the inoculation of British soldiers compulsory, nothing was done with regard to African troops in the

Cameroons.¹⁸³

At a time when chiefly loyalty to the war effort was being acknowledged by government, war time recruitment soon came to be tied up with the institution of slavery. In August 1915, three slaves of Paramount Chief Mafinda of the Banni Chiefdom, Kono country, absconded and enlisted in the battalion. In the absence of any slavery ordinances in Sierra Leone to help determine Mafinda's claims for restitution, this practice was to cause much embarrassment for the authorities and threatened the very cordial relations with the chiefs.¹⁸⁴

Perhaps the most threatening outcome of the process of mobilisation was the tendency by troops to use the occasion to indulge in excesses and the plunder of farms.¹⁸⁵ In April 1916, 1000 carriers and 615 O.R.'s of the Sierra Leone battalion left Duala for Freetown.¹⁸⁶ Returnees were to constitute a social problem intensifying the crime rate and the number of summary convictions for larceny in the Police Magistrate's Court.¹⁸⁷ Unlike the Nandi veterans who returned home,¹⁸⁸ many returnees now spurned the return to agriculture causing overcrowding in the capital and this led to desperate pleas for the application of the Vagrancy Act.¹⁸⁹ In Royema, Karene District, mobilisation was used as a pretext by soldiers for revenge against chiefs, who together with many of their subjects lost their wives to the returnees.¹⁹⁰

The return of soldiers of the West African Regiment to

Moyamba was to cause great acrimony between them and the chiefs. Buoyed up by their new found status, their "arrogant spirit" and demands for lodgings posed a formidable challenge to traditional authority.¹⁹¹ War time recruitment had clearly altered outlooks and perceptions and returnees clearly had "great expectations." Though it is not clear to what extent the behaviour of the tirailleurs in neighbouring French Guinea might have influenced them, it is probable that the claims of the former to being "equal" to white men,¹⁹² shaped the demands of returnees in Sierra Leone.

However, these agitations by Sierra Leone's soldiers could hardly be construed as the beginnings of nationalist politics (as Rosberg, Nottingham and Ogot argued in the case of Kenya¹⁹³) for their activities were clearly not directed at the nerve centre of colonial rule and political consciousness found meaning only at the local level. In fact Wyse¹⁹⁴ and Kilson¹⁹⁵ found no evidence to suggest this and the activities of the Sierra Leone branch of the National Congress of British West Africa never reflected the input of the war veterans.

Many lessons were to be learnt from the experience in the Cameroons. Whilst it provided young officers greater knowledge of their men,¹⁹⁶ it also alerted the Colonial Office to the need for attaching N.C.O.'s to the Sierra Leone Battalion.¹⁹⁷ If the battalion did not perform well in the Cameroons, the reasons were largely due to the organisational defects which characterised the command structure in war time. Set up for internal defence only, the battalion lacked

any administrative services suitable for despatch with an expeditionary force.

Command was never centralised in the hands of one soldier; there was no strategic plan of operations befitting a campaign of this scale and the short sighted policy of economy had been too rigidly enforced throughout the W.A.F.F. The garrison itself was an imperial one, commanded by an imperial officer misnamed G.O.C. West Africa who had no staff, intelligence service or organisation for dealing with the landward defences of the Protectorate. The anomaly was accentuated in war time when the battalion, a colonial force, came under his orders, but was still administered by the Colonial Office. This meant that in war time, the G.O.C. would have neither trained nor administered them and the forces (both colonial and imperial) had never been subject to unity of command and training especially so when the position of the Inspector-General had lapsed. These drawbacks clearly called for a strong imperial policy to deal with the problem of imperial defence. It was therefore argued that ultimate responsibility for defence should fall on the War Office for it was deemed "illogical that the War Office should be responsible for dealing with a situation in war for which they cannot prepare in peace."¹⁹⁸

Brigadier-General Kirke's preference for War Office control was however to unleash a flood of protests from the Colonial Office. Many officials felt it would be disastrous for the Sierra Leone Battalion to be administered by the War Office. The Expeditionary Force had come under War Office control

only because of the latter's refusal to lend officers and N.C.O.'s to the Colonial Office, which could not then secure motor cars and howitzers for the advance on Edea. They contended that the experience of continued friction in the colonies between the G.O.C. and the colonial governments were enough to demonstrate how impossible it would be for a force like the battalion, which was stationed throughout the Protectorate and which had to provide escorts and guards, to be under a G.O.C. who was not under the orders of the colonial governor.

Mr Grindle considered the proposal "an outrageous piece of militarism"¹⁹⁹ for even the decision to amalgamate colonial military forces in West Africa in 1899²⁰⁰ had precluded any control of the W.A.F.F. by the War Office. Since the W.A.F.F. still performed police duties and because it was still supported from colonial funds, officials found it impossible to diminish either gubernatorial control of, or the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the battalion. In 1907, War Office control had been effectively checked by the refusal of the Colonial Defence Committee to amalgamate the W.A.F.F. and the West African Regiment as the maintenance of internal order rested with the governor.

Deeply suspicious of War Office officers who had no knowledge of local conditions, Lieutenant-Colonel Beattie urged the importance of preserving the esprit de corps in the W.A.F.F. and the spirit of camaraderie which already existed between the W.A.F.F. and local governments.²⁰¹ Brigadier-General Wallace Wright found the proposal "unsound" and "premature."

Lieutenant-Colonel Jenkins argued that the role of the W.A.F.F. was a purely West African and colonial one and were the War Office to take control of the W.A.F.F. which had no departmental services of its own, they would need to create new services (a medical and sanitary department, transport and supply services and a military works department) which would entail significant expenditure.²⁰²

In many ways, the experience of World War I exposed the organisational drawbacks of the Sierra Leone Battalion which had undergone very little change by 1920. Haywood therefore recommended the double company system to bring it into line with other units. There was also a need to make the reserve force more attractive and efficient. Although the battalion was well drilled, practices such as exchanging compliments on the march and the habit of banging the butt of the rifle on the ground unnecessarily, detracted from instructions in the training manuals. No visual signalling was practised and there were no instructions in bombing with Mill bombs and rifle grenades. Of the six machine guns on battalion charge, four were by 1920, 20 years old, one 23 years and the other 31 years old.²⁰³

Significant reforms were also to be effected in recruiting. Though reputedly intelligent and endowed with a sturdy physique, the Cameroon experience led the authorities to conclude that both Mendes and Temnes were devoid of the courage and determination necessary to make good soldiers. By 1923 therefore, the War Office was inclining its recruitment towards the Susu, Yalunka, Koranko, Kono and

Kissi as "the best recruits come from the northern and north eastern border..."²⁰⁴ Clearly, the notion of the "martial races" was being given greater prominence after the war, but the administration was also beginning to doubt the effectiveness of the battalion in providing "that degree of internal security, the assurance of which should be a first charge on the revenue".²⁰⁵

Echoing this apparent loss of faith in the force, Wilkinson was to recommend "the creation" of a constabulary force "of equal numerical strength" to serve the purpose, for although he believed that it was "possible...to turn poor infantry into passable infantry" the Governor doubted whether "the best use of the material gifts of the Protectorate African" would be realised "if we tried to make of him what nature never intended him to be..."²⁰⁶ Inspector-General Haywood however did not share this pessimism. With first hand experience of the "Protectorate African" in the Cameroons, he realised that the men were "unused to such large demands for military service..." and "as British territory was never seriously threatened in West Africa, the enthusiasm of the natives was never fully aroused" before World War I.²⁰⁷

THE FATE OF RETURNEES

The return of the Sierra Leone Battalion to peace time soldiering at Daru, Bandajuma and Kailahun was not a pleasant experience. Because no preparations were made for their return, the men faced serious problems finding accommodation. The necessary repairs had not been done to the barracks which were falling in. At Bandajuma, the officers' mess had no

kitchen and latrines. Karene had to be abandoned because of the smallpox epidemic raging there.²⁰⁸ Generally, the lot of soldiers was far better than that of carriers for the former were entitled to gratuities on discharge for disablement. Wilkinson therefore advocated an annual charitable allowance of £6 for both soldiers and carriers who had lost either one or both lower limbs or who had been blinded in active service in the Cameroons, East Africa and Mesopotamia, for it was "undesirable that a bad impression be created by too great a delay in recognising some obligation to these unfortunates..."²⁰⁹

As imperial troops, the men of the West African Regiment unlike the W.A.F.F. were not recommended for the Distinguished Conduct Medal or the Imperial Decoration, "presumably to avoid jealousy." For all their efforts, men like corporals Musa Kata, Morlai Maniga and private Akibu Turay, were only "mentioned in Dobell's despatches,"²¹⁰ and though the men of the W.A.F.F. had been employed for the "preservation of the King's glory," Wilkinson doubted whether the award of the King's Certificate would be appreciated by "native African troops" on discharge.²¹¹

If military service in the Cameroons disturbed the equilibrium of family life, the subtle battle for control between West Africa Command and the Colonial Office did little to assuage the problems faced by Sierra Leone's soldiers. In October 1915 Major Daniell's proposals for separation allowances for the West African Regiment, the Royal Engineers and the Royal Garrison Artillery, excluded

the men of the Sierra Leone Battalion on the excuse that their pay was "drawn from colonial funds."²¹² In the ensuing tussle, neither imperial nor colonial troops received the allowances.

Officials had to contend with the problem of tracing the families of deceased soldiers and carriers. Many had been induced to change by Krio settlers and missionaries²¹³ and this made it difficult to trace them or to hand over monies due to them, to their relatives.²¹⁴ The fate of the latter was equally depressing. In attempting to claim monies owed to carriers, many wives like Hannah Thomas had to contend with massive extortions, bribes demanded by pay clerks, unbearably long delays, problems of identification and false accounting.²¹⁵ These problems persisted until 1937 with the claims of Yattah, sister of Mamboh Sandafu of Gawoon Tongaya, Pujehun District, but the government however felt that she was merely "shooting an arrow into the air in the hope that it may transfix a doubloon or two."²¹⁶

By January 1917 free surgical appliances had been offered to the wounded but it was difficult to find employment for all cases of "permanent partial disablement."²¹⁷ Many returnees like Jonathan Frazer were driven to desperation by unemployment. A painter by trade he could find no employment "all over the town."²¹⁸ The problem itself was chiefly a function of government's failure to devise a comprehensive scheme for demobilised soldiers. Many preferred government work but the men of the W.A.F.F. were not originally included in Colonel Faunce's registration scheme to find work for men

men of the West African Regiment. On 7th May 1918, the Executive Council decided that preference be given to ex-soldiers for vacancies in government posts of £2 a month and below²¹⁹ but it was difficult to execute the scheme as there were very few openings by 1919 in the Police, Railway, Prisons, Public Works and Agricultural Departments. Vacancies, as those in the Railway Department for a messenger in 1920, became very competitive and depended on the "standard of intelligence" demonstrated by ex-soldiers like Bockari Kamara.²²⁰

Only in 1921 was the first Government Notice gazetted for veterans²²¹ to fill suitable vacancies in government employment but men like Momo Koroma who had served the colours for 12 years, soon discovered that they had to compete with applicants with "a prior claim."²²² Many wished to join the Police force, but very few openings occurred and as scores of discharged soldiers loitered about Freetown,²²³ the G.O.C. W.A.R., made a desperate appeal to employers of labour in 1924.²²⁴ By 1925, there were no vacancies in the Court Messenger Force and there were serious apprehensions about employing ex-soldiers on the basis of the character shown on their regimental and company conduct sheets. Major de Miremont was even determined "to explode the existing theory that government work is awaiting any and every discharged soldier."²²⁵

In some cases, soldiers with previous claims to chieftaincy found themselves in an ambiguous position when they returned to civil life. 2499 Sergeant Kamanda since 3rd September

1914, was desperate to know what his position would be under his cousin Vebbe who had been crowned Paramount Chief whilst he was away in the Cameroons. Because he was called up for service, Kamanda could not succeed his father who died in his absence. Government therefore decided that he should "sit down" under Vebbe and "obey him in all matters" until the chiefship fell vacant.²²⁶

However modest the efforts of the Sierra Leone soldier may have been in the Cameroons, his contributions were never to be forgotten. In May 1927, it was decided to commemorate the memory of 232 soldiers of the Sierra Leone Battalion, the West African Regiment, the Royal Engineers, the Medical Corps, the Inland Water Transport and 795 deceased men of the Sierra Leone Carrier Corps.²²⁷ The memorial was to be erected at George Street "the Whitehall of Freetown." Recommendations were therefore made for a portland stone together with the panels fully engraved to be sent out to Freetown.²²⁸ The work was completed in February and unveiled in March 1931.²²⁹

KRIO RESPONSES TO BRITISH POLICY OF RECRUITMENT

It was in many ways officialdom's failure to adequately reciprocate the loyalty of its subjects, that was to determine Krio reactions to British policy of recruitment. The Krios were to deeply resent officialdom's refusal to enlist them²³⁰ in war time especially so when the evidence shows that they had always cherished the military profession. By 1910, men like Thomas Johnson, Thomas Cole and William Coker had completed an average of 12 years service with the

battalion.²³¹ Krio ambitions to enlist had received a severe check in 1911 when they were excluded from the Volunteer Corps, and this explains the initial opposition by unofficial members in the Legislative Council, to vote the sum of £5,000 towards the National Relief Fund in October 1914.²³²

Shorunkeh Sawyerr was to call for a permanently trained volunteer force to defend the Colony against external attacks but Merewether had his doubts about costs though he felt such a force would erode racial feelings between Europeans and Krios.²³³ It is not unlikely that the many press campaigns mounted by the Krio against the discriminatory practices of white military officers did much to reinforce government's suspicion of the loyalty of the Krio recruit. By 1912 rumours were rife of W.A.F.F. officers compelling educated Africans in the Railway District to take off their hats and stand until they had passed.²³⁴

The opening days of the war were difficult ones for Krio society. Since 1892 they had been forced to contend with "the revolution in public service"²³⁵ marked by officialdom's insatiable thirst for "albocracy."²³⁶ Their preoccupation with things military could in part be said to have originated from fears (albeit unjustified) of a possible withdrawal of the British from Sierra Leone. Were that to happen, it was widely believed that "the Temne and Mendes shall pour upon us" for having "ousted them from the key positions of their fatherland." The only way to ward off this threat was (it was argued) through "military preparedness."²³⁷

Notwithstanding "Rambler's" plea for setting up a regiment

called the "Kings Own Creole Boys,"²³⁸ the government had abandoned all attempts to disguise its contempt for what it regarded as the "educated native" who was always "fond of talking about the colour bar."²³⁹ By January 1915, although Britain, unlike the French was still reluctant to employ Africans on the Western Front, two Krios were to prove the exceptions.

When in January, F.S. Dove's offer to serve at the front was accepted by the authorities in London, the news generated much euphoria back home and though it was not readily known in what capacity Dove was serving, it was seen as one big opportunity for "a good Creole boy" who had hitherto been "chafing under the restraint of a lack of opportunity" to "have a go at the Germans."²⁴⁰ Initially a law student in England before enlisting with the Tank Corps,²⁴¹ private 91658, Dove was during the war, a first driver with E. Battalion and on 23rd November 1917 was involved in manoeuvres at the battle of Cambrai. With four members of his crew killed, Dove "remained with his tank assisting the wounded" and for his exemplary and inspiring actions, was awarded the Military Medal.²⁴² For the Krio, Dove was the "pride of our nation..."²⁴³ and as the Eastern Standard and Akwapem Chronicle argued, "the educated West African" was "still holding his own...in every sphere of life..."²⁴⁴

In May 1915, Patrick Freeman, another Krio, was wounded at the Western Front and was hospitalised at Liverpool. Then 19, he was a "sea boy" running voyages between West Africa and Europe. He had joined the French Navy but took his discharge at the outbreak of war and enlisted in the British

army. In Freeman's going to the front, it was argued that "the blood of ancient and loyal Sierra Leone...has been represented on the great European battlefield."²⁴⁵ The Krios hoped that both examples would persuade the government to grant them "the privilege of training for the defence of our country..." They contended that most of those offered the opportunity "do not appreciate it...We Creoles...do not wait for the offer, we make it ourselves..."²⁴⁶ By 1917/18 the Krio plea had fallen on deaf ears and the community was "daily evincing a restless anxiety concerning not only the present but the future..."²⁴⁷

By 1919, the mood of unease and despondency which had insinuated itself into Krio circles forced many to begin searching for answers to a problem that was as old as the battalion itself. They found they had been discriminated against because of their so-called "forwardness" and "forcefulness"²⁴⁸ and the consequent Krio diatribe against the "Mende, Temne and Susu many of whom know very little of the English Language...but who are judged competent to guard the interests of...British subjects,"²⁴⁹ should be seen as an index of the frustrations of a society whose professions of loyalty were hardly reciprocated by officialdom.

Thereafter, editorials in the Weekly News and the Aurora were to engage the government in lengthy and acrimonious debates over the suitability of the Protectorate recruit in the battalion or the W.A.R.,²⁵⁰ and the complicity of the latter in the Anti-Syrian riots of 1919, merely helped to vindicate the Krio case.²⁵¹ The bitterness continued up till 1920 and

afterwards, fuelled in many ways by "repeated insults and assaults" by European officers "against respectable Sierra Leoneans..."²⁵² Yet in all this (as the Krios themselves argued) it appeared as if something was missing in a society hitherto characterised by "men of strong constitution", "energy and recuperative powers." They themselves lamented the rather "stunted" and "puny species" of their group, which contrasted with the "healthy" and "sturdy" men from the Protectorate; "It is these people who are the future hopes of the Colony."²⁵³

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33. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. to despatch, S.L. Conf (C) 20/5/13. Inspector-Generals Report, 1913; P.R.O. C.O. 445/33/18691.

34. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. C.5/14 M.P. Conf. 239/13. Annual Return of Military and Naval Resources of the Colony of Sierra Leone 12/1/14.

35. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department (W.D.) 2/14 - D.A.A. and Q.M.G. West Africa to Colonial Secretary, 17/1/14; C.S.O. W.D. 9/14, D.A.A. and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary, 7/2/14; W.D. 10/14 -D.A.A. and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary, 7/2/14.

36. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 29/10 - D.A.A. and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary No. 0/327/5, 16/11/10.

37. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 28/14 - D.A.A. and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary 27/4/14.

38. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. W.A.F.F. Conf. M.P. C 67/14, 51/14, 31/5/14; P.R.O. C.O. 445/34/21542.

39. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. SECRET (S) 4/14 - "Sierra Leone Defence Scheme" revised to December 1913.

40. P.R.O. W.O. 95/5388 - War Diary, Cameroons, Composite Battalions Gold Coast and Sierra Leone Battalion (Field Force), September 1914 to March 1916.

41. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.14/14 - Harcourt to Merewether, 29/7/14; Merewether to Harcourt, 30/7/14; Merewether to Harcourt 1/8/14.

42. *ibid* - Harcourt to Merewether 3/8/14.

43. *ibid*, Merewether to Harcourt 4/8/14.
44. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 65/14 - Major-General Daniell to Merewether, 6/8/14; Major Faunce, Acting G.S.O. to Colonial Secretary, 7/8/14; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Conf. G.H. 121/14, 29/9/14.
45. *ibid* - Colonial Secretary to D.A.A. and Q.M.G., 8/8/14.
46. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 68/14.
47. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 72/14.
48. P.R.O. CAB 21/468 - "War Organisation of the British Empire" 12/11/09; Appendix III of "Proposed Institution of a Standing Technical Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 11/11/09.
49. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. WD. 109/14, J.F. Daniell to Merewether, 6/11/14; Harcourt to Merewether 7/11/14; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.57/14.
50. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.16/14 - Major B. Faunce, Acting G.S.O. to Colonial Secretary 14/8/14; Merewether to Postmaster General, in *ibid*.
51. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.12/14 - Telegram, Harcourt to Merewether, 12/8/14.
52. *ibid* - G.O.C. Daniell to Merewether 13/8/14; Merewether to Harcourt, 13/8/14. Such fears had been expressed in March 1914. See S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential (C) 21/14.
53. *ibid* - Merewether to Colonial Secretary 16/3/14.
54. P.R.O. C.O. 267/562/32815 - A.H. Bennet to Sir Edward Grey, 24/8/14. Bennet, appointed Commissioner by President Howard to make peace with the Liberian rebel chief Yeopolapay, had agreed to provide information on Liberia for the British government. Merewether himself had been ordered to collect information regarding German activities that may cross the border from Liberia.
55. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.12/14 - Telegram, Harcourt to Merewether, 17/8/14.
56. *ibid*, Telegram, Harcourt to Merewether, 18/8/14.
57. P.R.O. CAB 45/113 - C.V. Owens, "Sierra Leone Troops in the Great war, 1914-1918;" Summary of Operations for War Office, Military Handbook, December 1931.
58. S.L.N.A. - C.S.O. S.20/14 - Telegram, Governor Robertson, Accra to Merewether, 23/8/14; G.O.C. Daniell to Merewether, 23/8/14.
59. *ibid*, Telegram, Harcourt to Merewether, 23/8/14.
60. *ibid*, Merewether to Secretary of State, 25/8/14.

61. P.R.O. C.O. 445/48/19. See also London Gazette, 31/5/16, Fourth supplement to Gazette 30/5/16.
62. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.30/14 - Telegram I.G.W.A.F.F. to Merewether, 16/9/14.
63. *ibid*, G.O.C. Daniell to Merewether, 17/9/14; Merewether to Harcourt, 17/9/14.
64. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 95/14.
65. P.R.O. C.O. 267/561/47001, Merewether to Harcourt, 12/11/14.
66. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.45 - Alex Flint, for Secretary, Admiralty to Senior Naval Officer, Sierra Leone, copy of letter M.03496 (Immediate and Secret) 13/11/14.
67. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P.C. 223/14 (G.H.5.15.) 7/1/15.
68. P.R.O. C.O. 267/564/3188, Merewether to Harcourt, 7/1/15.
69. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. (G.H.18.15.) 10/2/15.
70. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.5/15.
71. P.R.O. C.O. 267/564/1458, Merewether to Secretary of State 10/1/15;
72. *ibid*, Baynes to Ellis, 11/1/15; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.2/15. G.O.C. Daniell to War Office 9/1/15.
73. P.R.O. C.O. 554/28/48183 - Major Jenkins, Memo to Mr. Strachey, 19/10/15.
74. P.R.O. C.O. 445/35/11878 - Merewether to Secretary of State 11/3/15.
75. P.R.O. C.O. 554/28/48183 - Major Jenkins, memorandum to Mr. Strachey, 19/10/15.
76. P.R.O. CAB 24/ "GT" series/202 - Memorandum on the Assistance of the Colonies and Protectorates in the War 16/3/17.
77. P.R.O. C.O. 267/564/12035 - Annual Report Ronietta District 1914.
78. P.R.O. C.O. 267/570/12949 - Annual Report Railway District 1915.
79. P.R.O. C.O. 267/271/24882 - Annual Report Ronietta District 1915.
80. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D.104/15, D.C. Koinadugu to Colonial Secretary, 6/12/15.
81. P.R.O. C.O. 445/35/11878 - Jenkins to Ellis, 12/3/15.

82. C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner - "France, Africa and the First World War" in Journal of African History, XIX,1, 1978 p.17.

83. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 11/16 - Major R. Litchford a/D.A.A. and Q.M.G. West Africa to Colonial Secretary, 7/2/16.

84. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Secretary of State (S.S.) Frontier Force (F.F.) 7/15.

85. P.R.O. C.O. 445/35/8615 - Major Jenkins to Mr Fiddian, 22/2/15.

86. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Miscellaneous 107/14 - Dobell to Merewether 1/6/15.

87. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 55/14 - "After Orders," by Major-General J.F. Daniell, Commanding the Troops, West Africa; By Command of the Army Council, War Office Telegram, 7/8/14.

88. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Frontier Force (F.F.) 27/15 - Lt. G. Clements, O.C. Details, W.A.F.F., Sierra Leone Battalion, to Colonial Secretary, 10/7/15.

89. P.R.O. C.O. 445/35/38294 - Acting-Governor Hollis to Bonar Law, 5/8/15.

90. *ibid.* J.F. Daniell to Hollis 14/7/15, Encl. to despatch.

91. See S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Miscellaneous 107/14 - "List of casualties in the Native Ranks of the S.L. Battalion, W.A.F.F. and West African Regiment serving with the Expeditionary Force up to and including 28/3/15." C.M. Dobell, Commanding the Allied Forces, to Merewether, 30/3/15.

92. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Miscellaneous Received 1915 - J.F. Daniell to Merewether, 3/9/15; Local Miscellaneous 846/Misc. 28/15 in C.S.O. Colonial Secretary 119/15.

93. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 123/15 - Daniell to Merewether, 4/12/15; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Miscellaneous Received, Daniell to Merewether, 9/12/15.

94. P.R.O. W.O. 95/5388 - War Diary, Cameroons, Composite Battalion Gold Coast and Sierra Leone Battalion (Field Force) September 1914 to March 1916.

95. P.R.O. C.O. 445/31/28366 - Mr Read to G. Fiddes, 20/6/16.

96. *ibid* - "Memorandum on Conference at the Colonial Office, 26/6/16.

97. *ibid* - "Interdepartmental Conference as to the recruitment of West African troops for service in East Africa," 18/7/16.

98. P.R.O. CAB 24 "G" series/1/38; CAB 24 "G" series/2/85.

99. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/49886 - "Memorandum on Conference at

the Colonial Office 24/10/16, (W.A.F.F. Nigeria, 18/10/16).

100. *ibid*, Mr Fiddian to Messrs Strachey and Read 17/10/16.

101. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/7127 - Director of Military Operations, War Office, to Bonar Law, 13/2/16. 0154/4137 (M.O.I.) SECRET. W.A.F.F., Cameroons.

102. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/52973 - Telegram, Governor Clifford to Walter Long 3/11/16. W.A.F.F./Gold Coast/East Africa.

103. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/48999 - Mr Fiddian to Messrs Ellis, Strachey and Read 27/10/16. W.A.F.F./Nigeria/East Africa.

104. *ibid* - B.B. Cubitt to Under Secretary of State 13/10/16. 0165/4825 (M.O.2.B) SECRET.

105. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/55218 - R.H. Brade to Under Secretary of State 10/11/16. 20/General No 435. (S.S.D.D.2), W.A.F.F.

106. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/56748 - Bonar Law to Governors, West Africa, 28/11/16. W.A.F.F., Nigeria/Gold Coast.

107. P.R.O. C.O. 445/45/10673 - Secretary of State, Foreign Affairs to the French Ambassador 28/2/18.

108. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/59718 - "Instructions to Major (Temporary Lt. Col.) A.H.W. Haywood," D.S.O., Royal Artillery. War Office, December 1916. Haywood had just reverted to the army and had previously commanded a battalion of the Nigeria Regiment. He had served the W.A.F.F. for ten years in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and the Cameroons.

109. P.R.O. CAB 24/ "GT" Series/8 - "Memorandum on the Assistance of the Colonies and Protectorates in the War," 16/3/17.

110. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/40807 - Lt-Col. Hastings - "Report on the Sierra Leone Battalion, Cameroon Operations," 8/8/16.

111. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/53625 - Boyle, Deputy-Governor, Nigeria to Secretary of State, 7/11/16.

112. *ibid* - Major Beattie to Mr. Read, 8/11/16.

113. *ibid* - Mr Ellis to Mr Fiddian 9/11/16.

114. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/60721 - Lugard to Bonar Law, Telegram 22/11/16. W.A.F.F. Nigeria.

115. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/56556. W.A.F.F./Nigeria/Sierra Leone.

116. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/32704 - Thurston to Beattie 22/7/16. W.A.F.F. Gambia.

117. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/56556 - Major Beattie to Mr Fiddian, 30/11/16. W.A.F.F./Nigeria/Sierra Leone.

118. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/60721.

119. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/59225.

120. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/56556 - Major Beattie to Messrs Fiddian, Ellis and Read, 7/12/16.

121. P.R.O. C.O. 445/36/3520 16/17 - Lugard to Walter Long, 27/12/16. W.A.F.F. Nigeria, Conf(C).

122. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/59225 - Major Beattie to Messrs Read and Ellis, 19/12/16.

123. P.R.O. C.O. 445/42/3075 - General Dobell to Major Beattie, 4/1/17.

124. S.L.N.A. - "Annual Return of Military and Naval Resources of the Colony of Sierra Leone," 31/12/16.

125. P.R.O. C.O. 445/41/1048 - Rear Admiral, Ninth Cruiser Squadron to Admiralty, 4/1/17. W.A.F.F./Sierra Leone/Nigeria. For a detailed account of the Senusi threat, see A. Osuntokun- Nigeria in the First World War (Longman Ltd., 1979) pp150 -162. Arrangements were made for the despatch of 1,000 troops and carriers on 4th January 1917 and a further 1,600 within the next ten days.

126. P.R.O. C.O. 445/42/27100 - Haywood - "Report on Recruiting in West Africa." SECRET, 2/5/17; For French policy and the levee en masse, see C.J. Balesi - "From Adversary to Comrade in Arms: West Africans and the French Military" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Illinois, 1976. Facsimile University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan. U.S.A. London 1979)

127. P.R.O. C.A.B 45/27. Memorandum by the Historical Section, War Office, 1933. Brigadier R.H. Haining, D.D.M.O. and I., to Brigadier-General Sir J E Edmonds, 15/6/33. SECRET 0165/2168 (M.O. I).

128. See for example, P.R.O. CAB 45/113/ - C.V. Owens - "Sierra Leone Troops in the Great War;" Summary of Operations for War Office Military Handbook, December 1931.

129. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 5/15 - Major M. Bird, D.A.A. and Q.M.G. West Africa to Colonial Secretary 11/1/15; Colonial Secretary to D.C. Railway District 13/1/15; D.C. Railway to Colonial Secretary 18/1/15.

130. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 9/15 - Major Bird to Colonial Secretary 26/2/15.

131. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 104/15 - Major R Litchford a/D.A.A. and Q.B.G. to Colonial Secretary 1/10/15; Litchford to Colonial Secretary 14/10/15.

132. *ibid*, Colonial Secretary to D.A.A. and Q.M.G. 22/11/15; D.C. Moyamba to Colonial Secretary 28/11/15.

133. *ibid*, General Manager, Sierra Leone Government Railway to Colonial Secretary 23/12/15; P.R.O. C.O. 267/271/24882 - Annual Report Ronietta District 1915.

134. For details about the role of the Regiment, see P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Encl. C.; P.R.O. C.O. 445/41/12025 - B.B. Cubitt to Under-Secretary of State, 5/3/17. 074/5102. W.A.F.F. Gambia/East Africa.

135. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Encl. A - "Narrative of the part taken in the war by the Sierra Leone Co. R.G.A.," 9/2/19.

136. P.R.O. W.O. 95/5387 - War Diary, Sierra Leone Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery - Major Chevalier, Diary 1/8/15.

137. *ibid* - Chevalier - Diary 31/10/15; 7/12/15.

138. P.R.O. W.O. 95/5388 - Lt. W.S. Jackson. "Report on Sierra Leone Detachment, R.E."

139. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Encl B - "Statement of War Services of the Native Half Company, 36th Coy, Royal Engineers." 9/4/19.

140. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 21/14 - D.A.A. - and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary 6/4/14; D.C. Stanley to Colonial Secretary 20/4/14.

141. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Railway Construction (R.C.) 58/14 - J.W. Graham, Acting Chief Resident Engineer, Makeni-Baga Extension to Colonial Secretary, 7/10/14, Colonial Secretary (C.S.) 173/14.

142. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Matter (L.M.) Miscellaneous 107/14. S.L. No. 509, Harcourt to Merewether 28/10/14 - Copies of notification sent to the press regarding the military operations which had taken place in Nigeria and the Cameroons.

143. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. SECRET 11/14.

144. R.P.M. Davies - The History of the Sierra Leone Battalion of the Royal West African Frontier Force (Freetown, Government Printer 1932) p.70.

145. P.R.O. C.O. 554/28/48183 - Major Jenkins, Memo to Mr Strachey 19/10/15.

146. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. C. 28/15 - Merewether to Consul General Monrovia 1/3/15; P.R.O. CAB 37/133/7.

147. P.R.O. 445/35/9418 - Mr Fiddes to Major Jenkins 12/3/15.

148. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 47/15 - Major Litchford 1/WIR, a/D.A.A. and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary 18/5/15; Heslip to Colonial Secretary, 20/5/15.

149. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 119/15 - Litchford to Colonial Secretary 15/11/15.

150. *ibid*, Litchford to Colonial Secretary 4/1/16.

151. P.R.O. C.O. 445/35/59301 - "Report on Reservists, Sierra

Leone Battalion, W.A.F.F. 1915. 16/11/15.

152. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/14577 - Mr Ellis to Mr strachey 30/3/16.

153. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - F.E. de Chevalier - "Narrative of the part taken in the war by the S.L. Coy. R.G.A.

154. P.R.O. W.O. 95/5387 - Chevalier, War Diary, Fumban 7/12/15.

155. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/4238 - op.cit.

156. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential (C) 51/20 - Major Heslip to Under Secretary of State, 14/6/20; C.30/1920; C.561/20; C.261/20; C.223/19.

157. P.R.O. W.O. 95/5388 - War Diary, W.A.R. July 1915.

158. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 60/15 - Lt.Col. Evan Knox, Commanding Detachment, W.A.R. to Governor 15/2/15; P.R.O. W.O. 95/5388 War Diary W.A.R. September 1914 to February 1916.

159. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/26682 - C.M. Dobell to Mr Ellis, 31/5/16; W.A.F.F. Sierra Leone.

160. P.R.O. W.O. 95/5388 - War Diary. For further problems encountered by the troops see Lt. Col. A.H.W. Haywood - "Brief Note on strategy and tactics of the campaigns in the Cameroons" in the Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, vol. LXV, no.458, May 1920. pp.299-301. (Royal Commonwealth Society Library, London)

161. P.R.O. CAB 45/113 - C.V. Owens - "Sierra Leone Troops in the Great War 1914," Summary of Operations for War Office Military Handbook, December 1931.

162. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/17206 - Wilkinson to Walter Long, 14/3/17.

163. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 83/14 - Colonial Secretary to G.S.O. Tower Hill, 29/9/14; "Report of the Compensation Board," Freetown, December 1914.

164. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonial Secretary (C.S.) 293/14 - Colonial Secretary to all D.C.'s, 11/8/14.

165. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Sherbro 28/14 - D.C. Railway District, Blama, to Colonial Secretary, 23/9/14.

166. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonial Secretary 313/14 - Colonial Secretary to General Staff Officer, 28/8/14.

167. Anne Summers and R.W. Johnson - "Conscription and Social Change in Guinea" - J.A.H. XIX, 1, 1978. P.27

168. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Sierra Leone Consular, M.P.Foreign Govt., 33/15 - Glozel, Governor-General, Dakar to Merewether,

19/10/15.

169. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonial Secretary 324/14 - Colonial Secretary to D.A.A. and Q.M.G., 14/8/14.

170. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonial Secretary 333/14 - Comptroller of Customs to Colonial Secretary, 12/2/15; C.S.O. Colonial Secretary 389/14 - N.J. Campbell-Hollis, Secretary, the Gambia to Colonial Secretary Freetown, 15/10/14.

171. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Railway District 65/17 - D.C. Bowden to Colonial Secretary 4/10/17.

172. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. F.F. 27/15 - Lt. G. Clements, O.C. Details, S.L. Bn. W.A.F.F. to Colonial Secretary 10/7/15.

173. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 42/16 - Captain Greaves, W.A.R., to Colonial Secretary 15/4/16.

174. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/23770 - Annual Report, Department of Agriculture 1916 Appendix I.

175. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Secret 8/14 - G.O.C. Daniell to Merewether, 31/7/14.

176. P.R.O. C.O. 267/566/32138 - Merewether to Bonar Law, 29/6/15.

177. P.R.O. C.O. 267/566/40004 - Statement of Expenditure, 1st September to 31st July 1915.

178. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. G.H. 13/16, 14/16, 15/16; P.R.O. C.O. 267/570/6315 - Acting-Governor Hollis to Secretary of State 9/2/16.

179. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 89/15 - J.F. Daniell to Merewether 31/7/15.

180. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/42910 - Annual Report Medical Department 1916.

181. P.R.O. C.O. 445/50/4476 - List of casualties, W.A.F.F., 6/1/20.

182. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Enclosure C.

183. P.R.O. C A B 37/124/3, 2/2/15.

184. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/42894 - Wilkinson to Bonar Law, 23/8/16; Mr Calder to Mr Read, 5/10/16; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. G.H. 78/16, M.P. C.212/16. For the Colonial Office's approach to the question of slavery in war time, see S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 164/20; C.S.O. L.M. 1/18; C.S.O. Confidential 8/17, 216/17, 212/16; D.C. Railway 59/16; D.C. Karene 15/19. The only references to slavery up to 1916, were sections 36 to 40 of the Protectorate Ordinance, No. 33, 1901 and Section 5 of the Protectorate Courts Jurisdiction Ordinance, No. 6, 1903. The most authoritative study on domestic slavery in Sierra Leone in the period under review is John Grace's Domestic Slavery in West Africa with

- particular reference to Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1896-1927 (Frederick Muller, 1975)
185. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Sherbro 28/14, D.C. Port Loko Sub-district to Colonial Secretary, 29/9/14; S.L.W.N. 6/3/20.
186. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 35/16 - Telegram, Duala to Headquarters, Sierra Leone, 19/4/16.
187. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/50804 - Blue Book Report 1916.
188. L.J. Greenstein - "The Nandi Experience in The First World War" in M.E. Page (ed) - Africa and The First World War (Macmillan Press) p. 91.
189. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. L.M. 385/16 - Mr J. Coker to Colonial Secretary April 1916. On this point see also Sierra Leone Report of the Census for the year 1921 (London, 1922) cited in M. Crowder and J.F.A. Ajayi - The History of West Africa Vol.11 (New York, 1978) p.52.
190. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Koinadugu 108/16 - D.C. Karene to Colonial Secretary, 14/9/16. On this point see also C.S.O. M.P. 2332/07, 4083/08; C.S.O. M.P. 119/11.
191. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Ronietta 53/16 - D.C. Fairtlough to Colonial Secretary, 22/7/16.
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228. *ibid* - Principal Assistant Secretary I.W.G. Commission to Colonial Secretary 4/1/29.
229. *ibid* - Director of Public Works to Colonial Secretary 2/2/31; Acting-Colonial Secretary to Commissioner of Police 5/3/31; Gazette Notice No 153, 7/3/31.

230. The history of the rejection of the Krios from the military in Colonial Sierra Leone is as old as the Sierra Leone Battalion. For details see S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Inspector General's Report, 5/4/02; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.A.F.F. File 1903-1910 - Inspector General's Report 1906, Conf No.4. In 1908, there were only 17 Krios in a battalion of 432 O.R.s. See S.L.N.A. C.S.O. - Inspector-General's Report 18/4/08.

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232. P.R.O. C.O. 267/560/38101 - Mr Ellis to Mr. Fiddes 5/10/14; P.R.O. C.O. 267/560/38971 - Merewether to Secretary of State 9/10/14; P.R.O. C.O. 267/560/40912 - Merewether to Secretary of State 21/10/14.

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Chapter 3: THE SIERRA LEONE CARRIER CORPS

Sierra Leone's contribution to the war effort in East Africa was mainly connected with Britain's determination to fight a "porter's war" against the Germans.¹ Lucas,² Clifford³ and Downes⁴ have attempted to document the history of carrier service in East Africa but as Hodges rightly argues, the literature is still plagued by a dearth of statistical information.⁵ This chapter attempts to fill in some of the gaps by examining the process of recruitment in the various districts, the problems faced by recruiting officers and the overall impact of recruitment. More importantly it examines a much neglected factor in the labour history of Sierra Leone -the Inland Water Transport contingent.

Whilst the Krio youth sought to proclaim his "love" for "the soldier's life," the "smart uniform and the swaggering gait of the sojer man," the desperate position of the allies in East Africa and the need for carriers to service the Nigerian contingent despatched there, provided the pretext for the Sierra Leone government to once more ignore the Krio plea for "a chance of promotion to induce him to join the colours."⁶ Desperation and penury had led many Krios like Daniel Pratt to make a passionate plea to Merewether for employment.⁷

Convinced that he ought "to do my best for my king and country," Pratt also pleaded to be given "a chance in the army or the navy."⁸ A "fitter by trade," he wished to be

enlisted in the army's transport department or as "a carpenter in the war field." He was also willing to serve as a "carrier headman,"⁹ but officialdom was loath to treat with an applicant who "seems to have a very good opinion of himself."¹⁰ This rejection of the Krio youth, even for carrier service ensured that the burden of carrier work fell on groups from the Protectorate, chiefly the Mendes.

RECRUITING FOR THE CORPS

If the combatant capacity of Sierra Leone's soldiers left much to be desired, Sierra Leoneans were regarded as the best carriers in British West Africa. In late December 1916, General Smuts was requesting 4,000 carriers to service the Nigerian Overseas Contingent in East Africa. The dependence on Sierra Leone was predicated on the War Office's desire to tap every able bodied "Hausa" for combatant roles. The demand was further justified by apparent drawbacks elsewhere. Although they made good carriers locally, Ibos it was argued exhibited a strong aversion to serve overseas;¹¹ regular Indian troops and units from the Indian states, South African troops - both of British and Dutch extraction - and the contingent from the British West Indies, all succumbed to disease¹² and the hazards of the "equally specialised but widely different conditions of the African bush."¹³

Furthermore, the administration in East Africa had to contend with widespread resistance from groups like the Masai, the Kipsigis, the Luo and the Giriama to the demand for labour. Settler demands for labour on European farms also combined to limit recruitment for carrier service in East Africa

itself.¹⁴ Major Beattie therefore argued that "Sierra Leone could best serve the purpose..."¹⁵

The origins of the Sierra Leone Carrier Corps can be traced back to January 1917 when recruiting began through chiefs and District Commissioners. Assistant District Commissioners who had firstly been seconded for military service also carried out recruiting and "because they were known personally to the chiefs," coupled with the attractive rates of pay held out to potential recruits, "they succeeded in getting a good class of carrier,"¹⁶ this in spite of the memories of hardship endured by their kith and kin in the Cameroons. 3,500 carriers were assembled in their respective districts and were formed into companies of 500 each. They were drilled and "disciplined within a short time and the result proved of great advantage when they ultimately reached the scene of their activities."¹⁷

In response to the desperate conditions in East Africa, Wilkinson consented to raise 4,000 carriers in one month.¹⁸ They were to be organised into eight companies under 20 headmen and were to receive a shilling a day and headmen, 1/6d.¹⁹ The Army Council suggested that part of their wages be held back as deferred pay or that some portion be allowed to their families,²⁰ but the initial enthusiasm generated among recruits was soon dampened by the sudden vacillations in colonial circles. By 19th January, the Army Council ordered that the quota to be provided by Sierra Leone was to be limited to 3,000 in view of the 1,000 already raised in Nigeria.²¹

In the main, government had recourse to the Mende Chief "King" George Cummings for the provision of carriers. George Cummings was willing to both raise the first contingent of 2,000 at the rate of £300, and to feed and house them before embarkation.²² By 2nd February however, he had only managed to raise 700 and District Commissioners therefore came under increasing pressure to provide the rest. 1,300 were required by 14th February and the rest by 1st March,²³ but though recruits were offered a further inducement of rations or 3d allowance and although chiefs were promised a bonus in proportion to the numbers they provided,²⁴ the administration encountered serious difficulties in fulfilling the requests of General Smuts.

By 17th February this problem was further compounded by complications on the international scene. General Hoskins was requesting an additional 5,000 carriers and the failure by the War Office to secure enough recruits elsewhere, imposed additional pressures on Sierra Leone. By then recruiting in the East African Protectorate, Uganda, Nyasaland and German East Africa had been exhausted. The Portuguese government had instructed its Governor General in Portuguese East Africa to discuss the question of recruitment with the British military authorities, but the Belgian military authorities in German East Africa "pointedly declined" to allow General Smuts to recruit carriers in Tabora District.

Because Britain had prevented the French from recruiting labour in British Somaliland, the French Government turned

down the War Office's request for carriers from Madagascar. Above all, "reasons of policy render it undesirable to put ourselves under obligation" to the Belgians and the French.²⁵ The Colonial Office's suggestion that as many carriers as possible should be raised in East Africa itself and that the deficit be secured from West Africa, meant turning to Sierra Leone and Nigeria for "this...indefinite number at the earliest possible date."²⁶ Mr Butler found the request "perfectly useless" and advised that coolie transport be secured from India instead.²⁷

The increasing dependence on Sierra Leone was to lead to an inter-departmental conference on 28th February 1917 to consider the difficulties encountered by the War Office in raising recruits in East Africa, the Belgian Congo and the numbers to be recruited from West Africa; whether objections by the Admiralty to Wilkinson's readiness to raise a further 5,000 had been overcome, reports on carrier recruitment in Sierra Leone by Colonel Haywood, questions relating to the provision of transport for the carriers and the costs for the Corps including civil officials and local unofficials attached to it.²⁸ Though Rhodesia tried to ease the burden on Sierra Leone by attempting to raise 6,000 carriers for General Northy, there were still difficulties to contend with. Mr. Read and Lord Drogheda felt "it was not safe to count on the Portuguese;" at a time when General Hoskins was pressing for 9,000 carriers, the French were busy recruiting all available men from Madagascar.

Further problems like providing shipping facilities for the

Corps and the likelihood of desertion among the men whilst they waited also occupied the attention of delegates to the conference. Once more, the usual question of the dearth of officers was raised and, in view of these problems, the conference resolved to stop recruiting carriers in Nigeria and Sierra Leone temporarily pending the provision of shipping facilities. Whilst recruitment for combatants was to continue, pressure was to be put on the Portuguese government to expedite the recruitment of carriers in Portuguese East Africa. The possibility of recruiting in the Belgian Congo and Madagascar was however to be shelved but General Hoskins was to provide information on the degree of medical assistance required for the carriers raised.²⁹

Between February and March 1917, Northern Sherbro contributed 400 carriers for East Africa. Assembled at Pujehun for 28 days, they elected their own headmen but apart from two daily roll calls, and the issuing of rations, no attempt was made to drill them. The only discipline they knew was that acquired "through their own Poro laws," but it was significant that this was the first time the chiefs in the district were asked to find carriers for service outside the Colony.³⁰ An equally remarkable degree of loyalty was demonstrated by the chiefs of Karene. "One chief...when asked for carriers, detailed there and then his own son as headman for his own contingent."³¹

Although many were rejected in the Port Loko sub-district, 127 carriers actually left for East Africa in 1917.³² The Railway District was no less important in the supply of carriers and many like Badea, Gina Gatu, Amara and Bockarie,

came from Gboe, Humonyha, Foray and Mano chiefdoms respectively. The Fatoma, Posewa and Bundewa chiefdoms also supplied men for the Corps.³³ From Kenema alone in the same district, over 1,000 men volunteered for service.³⁴ Chief Musa of Mano in Ronietta District and chief Boima of Bo in the Railway District were to render invaluable service to the government. Carriers were assembled at Mano and Bo where they awaited despatch to East Africa.³⁵

Quartered at these bases for periods extending over two or three months, the task of providing accommodation for "such large numbers of men until barracks could be constructed," proved a severe strain on the resources of the chiefs and their people, but "they made no complaint" and "are...deserving of special recognition..." In September, Wilkinson therefore recommended both Musa and Boima for a medal.³⁶ The best mobilisation centres were Makeni (for A Company) and Daru (for B Company) Songo having been initially rejected because of its proximity to Freetown.³⁷ Though Songo was later to become a collecting camp, the rationale then was that barracks situated in the neighbourhood of towns exposed the troops to "undesirable local influences" which militated against efficiency.³⁸

In April 1917, the War Office suggested that in future carriers were to be raised in West Africa at the rate of 4,000 a month provided this did not prejudice the recruitment of combatants.³⁹ Wilkinson was therefore requested to determine the maximum monthly quota which Sierra Leone could provide.⁴⁰ The emphasis on Sierra Leone drew its inspiration from Colonel Haywood's report on recruiting in West Africa.

Indeed, Haywood and Lugard had concluded that the Mende of Sierra Leone, then numbering 400,000 "make excellent carriers."⁴¹ These sentiments were clearly not without foundation and were deeply rooted in the history of Mende carrier work. Mende prowess as carriers was already well known as early as the Ashanti war of 1900 when the late Madam Yoko supplied 2,000 Mende carriers for the expedition against the rebels. In fact Mende carriers were constantly in demand not only in Sierra Leone but also in other parts of West Africa.⁴²

"Cheerful...amenable and hardy," the Mendes were reputedly the best carriers in West Africa.⁴³ Glowing accounts already abounded of their carrier work in the Cameroon campaigns. The attempts for example to cross the river Fumban through Bangetabe were bedevilled by marshes and swampy forest paths obstructed by waist-deep mud holes and low overhanging branches. The distance of five miles spanned seven hours but "the way in which the gun carriers from Sierra Leone managed to transport their loads was a source of astonishment and admiration."⁴⁴ Although the Haywood mission had served to expose the fallacy of the "million Black army" he was confident that 10,000 carriers could be raised in Sierra Leone by voluntary means.

Carriers raised in April were to be divided into two companies of 500 each, every district supplying the following monthly quota -Koinadugu 250, Karene 150, Ronietta 100, Railway District 250, Northern Sherbro 200, and Sherbro District 50.⁴⁵ The Corps left Freetown on 22nd April via the

Cape, the voyage lasting six weeks. On 30th May, two companies disembarked at Kilwa Kisiwani in ex-German territory to join the Gold Coast Regiment and the remaining companies later disembarked at Dar-es-Salaam.⁴⁶

The history of carrier recruitment in Sierra Leone throughout the war presents an almost insurmountable problem for the researcher attempting to determine the precise number of non-combatants recruited. The evidence suggests that between August 1914 and August 1917, Sierra Leone had supplied 13,023 non-combatants to the war effort in the Cameroons and in East Africa. Of these, 11,890 were carriers and 220 gun carriers.⁴⁷ Although it is equally difficult to estimate the exact number of carriers sent to East Africa, the claims forwarded by chiefs to the military authorities are very revealing.

Whilst military sources argued that 4,756 carriers actually embarked for East Africa, chiefly lists show a total of 4,964. According to the latter, the Railway District supplied 1,382 carriers, Ronietta 1,270, Northern Sherbro 812, Karene 634, Freetown 531 and Koinadugu 335.⁴⁸ By September 1917, a total of 4,953 carriers had been sent to East Africa from Sierra Leone and were despatched as follows - 1,042 on 29th May, 2,085 on 1st June, 275 on 6th June, 1,051 on 20th July and 500 on 12th September.⁴⁹ Whatever the disparities in numbers, it is clear that Sierra Leone did make a significant contribution to the war effort in East Africa.

Compulsion clearly had its advantages in terms of increasing the number of combatants and non-combatants but it appealed more to the French and was not always resorted to in Sierra Leone. Haywood in fact had warned against it in West Africa particularly so when the number of recruits "who enlist from pure love of soldiering is very small." Above all, it was bound to lead to resistance.⁵⁰ The second attempt ever made in the history of the Colony to commandeer men for military service in 1912 had led to widespread disturbances at King Jimmy Wharf.⁵¹ Furthermore, many prejudices had to be overcome. Many recruits had never seen the sea and were afraid of it; with others, it was "against their fetish to cross the water." Many harboured an instinctive dislike of food other than that to which they were accustomed and feared that they would not be given rice overseas.

Elsewhere in Ghana and Nigeria, attractive rates of pay in the police force and the mines precluded many from enlisting for carrier service. Haywood therefore urged the grant of inducements - offering ten or five shillings to suppliers of recruits, granting tax remissions, separation allowances and increased pay to recruits- in order to keep the flow of men up to the requisite standard. Haywood was full of praise for Sierra Leone's carriers. Practically the whole country except Muslim groups like the Susu, Koranko and Mandingo who occupied the northern frontier, could provide non-combatants. Sierra Leone therefore agreed to provide 10,000 carriers- between 1,000 and 1,500 during the first six months of 1917 and between 700 and 1,000 on a monthly basis afterwards. The

total number of fit and available men from the Temne, Mende, Sherbro, Limba and other groups then was 11,005.⁵²

Clearly Sierra Leoneans were providing abundant proof of their capacity for carrier service elsewhere. In the small government labour corps in the Gold Coast, (then 350 strong) almost all were Mendes from Sierra Leone. Similarly, in the gold mines where 27,000 labourers were employed, 4,500 came from Sierra Leone.⁵³ The Sierra Leone Carrier Corps which saw continuous service with the Gold Coast Regiment and the Nigerian Brigade was therefore well suited to the tasks of providing first and second line transport during the operations which lasted from June to December 1917 and which were carried out in the east of the country, north of the Rufiji river to the Rovuma on the Portuguese border, until the enemy was forced to retreat into Portuguese East Africa. In East Africa itself, the men were to maintain in "unabated measure their reputation as hard and willing workers,"⁵⁴ and "it is no exaggeration to say that theirs was a very important contribution to the successful operations that added by mandate 374,085 square miles to the empire."⁵⁵

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN RECRUITING CARRIERS

The task of securing carriers in Sierra Leone to service the contingents in East Africa posed considerable problems for the authorities. In a bid to escape recruitment, many able bodied men were to migrate from Karene district to some of the towns near the frontier.⁵⁶ February 1917 was a busy period for the authorities particularly in Pujehun where no carrier had been recruited since the beginning of the war.

The D.C. could therefore not ascertain what number he could raise, though he promised 350.⁵⁷ Moreover, because the idea of carrier service in the district was entirely new, it was "impossible to say how the young men...will respond to it..."

Very few Mendes (the group which usually volunteered for service abroad as carriers) lived in the district then⁵⁸ and the Gallinas and Krim "were nervous and inclined to run away."⁵⁹ Although Kenema promised 450 and 20 headmen by 12th February, and 300 carriers and 10 headmen by 1st March,⁶⁰ the D.C. Moyamba needed to confer with "all my chiefs."⁶¹ Karene however pledged to send 250 carriers and 10 headmen initially and the same number in the second batch.⁶²

Despatching carriers from the Protectorate to Freetown was to prove particularly burdensome for D.C.'s and railway officials who had to make dispositions for rolling stock.⁶³ Because it was impossible to provide the necessary accommodation for the men at collecting stations, D.C.'s had to request special trains to run, for example, from Bo to Daru and back.⁶⁴ At Kenema in particular there was every possibility of those already concentrated in large centres "melting away."⁶⁵ Even when transport was available, there were considerable delays. By 9th February, arrangements had been made to transport 800 carriers from Yonibana, Mano and Moyamba, but "transport will probably not arrive till 26th..." At Moyamba, other problems compounded the difficulties encountered in securing carriers. The incidence of smallpox made it inadvisable to continue recruitment there.⁶⁶ By 12th February, 400 carriers had been assembled

at Pujehun ready for despatch to collecting stations at Bo, but the problem of transportation made it necessary to "disperse them for the time being."⁶⁷

Conditions were not materially different at Port Loko where transport could not be secured to despatch the first complement of carriers.⁶⁸ The situation was all the more serious especially at a time when the O.C. Carrier Corps wished to form Numbers 5 and 6 Companies "without delay."⁶⁹ Most of those assembled at Moyamba "were full of enthusiasm" but "many desertions were feared" and the only alternative open to recruiting commissioners, was to disband them temporarily and reassemble them again at three or four days notice.⁷⁰ This course of action was to lead to problems at Port Loko where carriers were already deserting,⁷¹ and D.C. Kemp apprehended the same results at Bo.⁷²

In many ways, government's dependence on chiefs provided a perfect pretext for personal gain by the latter and recruits were always the losers. Many carriers accused "King" George of bribery during the process of selection, and also charged him with "acts of great injustice..." The lot of the carrier was also worsened by war time privations. Due to the high price of rice, government found it hard to feed carriers at Pujehun even at a rate of 3d per day,⁷³ and by 24th February, even the increase in rations could not solve the problem.⁷⁴

By April 1917, the demand for carriers had become more insistent, 500 more being required to proceed with the first

batch already raised.⁷⁵ Though the D.C. Kenema promised to raise 250 in ten days and the D.C. Moyamba 200,⁷⁶ the Colonial Office was requesting 4,000 carriers from West Africa.⁷⁷ D.C. Kemp at Bo promised to raise 250 per month for three months and 100 afterwards for three months.⁷⁸ Karene promised 100 per month and a maximum of 1,000.⁷⁹ Pujehun could only promise a maximum of 400 and the D.C. estimated that were conscription to be introduced, 10,000 could be secured in 10 months.⁸⁰ Though Koinadugu promised 250 monthly, the D.C. needed a month's notice as the district had never supplied carriers for war service.⁸¹

At Waterloo it was "difficult to obtain even as many as six."⁸² On the whole, matters relating to the Corps were essentially ad hoc and D.C.s knew neither whether more carriers would be required or when.⁸³ By May 1917, commissioners still had to contend with the problem of desertion in Karene and this necessitated further calls on the chiefs. Apart from the lack of food, the high incidence of medical rejections precluded the preparation of an accurate roll except "immediately prior to embarkation."⁸⁴

Other problems soon erupted at Karene. Because they were being drilled by officers who attended parade in "Sam Brown" belts, recruits feared that they were being enlisted as soldiers. So that out of the 300 recruited, only two were volunteers, the rest having been enrolled by their chiefs. Many able bodied men ran away to Freetown to avoid being taken on "and the chiefs are asking if anything could be done to prevent this emigration..." The only legal provision for

enforcing their return then, was the Vagrancy Ordinance No.19 of 1905, but traditional rulers in Freetown connived with emigrants, refusing to send them back and by so doing compounded the problems already being encountered in securing carriers.⁸⁵

In the Port Loko sub-district of Karene, where D.C. Frere in June was attempting to recruit carriers from Magbema and Billeh chiefdoms, five whole towns ran over to French Guinea.⁸⁶ The depopulation of whole villages was to arouse suspicions of compulsion and the Acting Colonial Secretary had to warn against any pressure being used.⁸⁷ In the south west of Koinadugu the failure of the 1916 rice crop made it difficult for D.C. Hollins to provide his quota on time. The same problems were faced by the Assistant D.C. at Gbangbama so that by late May, the O.C. No. 2 Coy at Mano was some 30 men below strength.⁸⁸

The resort to further compulsion in July 1917 was fraught with serious consequences. Wilkinson complained that "the old West African tendency...to use forced labour has asserted itself." Caught up in a war that made little sense to them, resistance and trouble soon followed in the wake of attempts to requisition manpower for the Corps and as many fled into French territory, whole villages were deserted. Apart from compulsion, the apparent lack of care for the carrier was to erode whatever enthusiasm was left in the villages. Though Wilkinson urged that they be kept contented, there were very few officers who could gain the confidence of the men, "turn out a better class of carrier" and preclude disturbances in

the Protectorate.

Clearly, the officers sent out lacked the "tact and experience" required for "handling" Africans. As Wilkinson rightly argued, refusal to enlist was due inter alia to the indefinite prolongation of the war and fears that they would be required to serve for as long as it lasted. Wilkinson found himself in a very unenviable position "without any...knowledge of War Office intentions," or when the demand for carriers would end.

The spate of insurrections due to conscription in French West Africa was to alert the Governor to the spectre of revolt in the dependency and he therefore urged "a policy more considerate to the natives."⁸⁹ This was all the more important especially so at a time when Africans in the Gold Coast were beginning to construe the feverish pace of recruitment as "a sign of weakness" in the ranks of the allied forces.⁹⁰ The problems associated with recruitment were to exert a negative influence on the Reserve Force which dropped from 72 in November 1916 to 6 in November 1917.⁹¹

The urge to enlist had dwindled considerably, punctuated in many ways by apprehensions of a possible breach of faith were the carriers to be used in another theatre of war. Neither the Colonial Office nor the Army Council knew what promises had been made to the men by their officers and because "the reliance placed by the West African...in the promises of his European officers is absolute...it is essential that this confidence should be maintained."⁹² Above all, as "long as

the chiefs are called upon by government to assist in recruiting, the carriers are not strictly speaking volunteers." Many agreed to serve "simply because they are under tribal discipline..." argued D.C. Stanley.⁹³ By August 1917 however, the demands on Sierra Leone had abated considerably and this meant disbanding between one and two hundred carriers then assembled at Mano.⁹⁴

SIERRA LEONE AND THE INLAND WATER TRANSPORT

The despatch of Sierra Leone's contingent to the Inland Water Transport was preceded by considerable equivocations by the Colonial and War Offices in their search for labour, first in France and then in Mesopotamia. Once more the shift to Sierra Leone was to come at a time when confidence in the combatant capacity of Sierra Leoneans was on the wane. When in September 1915 the War Office proposed recruiting a small labour corps of about 100 West African miners for work in France and the Mediterranean, the Governor of the Gold Coast countered that the expense to be incurred would be great, the quality of the labourers doubtful and that the local mining industry would be dislocated. Lugard in Nigeria was to share the same sentiments and both deplored the use of West Africans in Europe during the cold months of the year. In April 1916 however, it was further proposed that Kroo "boys" from Sierra Leone be recruited for dock work in Marseilles.

Wilkinson offered to provide a first batch of 500 and then 1,000 at a later date, but the committee responsible for Imperial Defence soon decided to abandon the scheme. Though a sea-faring group and accustomed to work in ships bound for

England, and therefore better suited to withstand the European climate, it was doubtful whether the Kroo were suitable for the service contemplated in France. Further, the rate of three shillings proposed for them (per diem) was found to be considerably higher than those laid down in the Army Pay Warrants.⁹⁵ By May therefore, the idea had been abandoned much to the chagrin of Chief Brown and his "boys."⁹⁶ Towards the end of August, the War Office once more turned to West Africa for 1,500 labourers for the Inland Water Transport and Sierra Leone offered to provide ordinary carriers at the rate of 1/2d a day.

In their bid to furnish relief for European Artillerymen employed in providing continuous supply service for siege batteries, the Army Council in September 1916 proposed to raise a force of some 6,000 "coloured" troops either in West or South Africa. These were to be organised into ammunition supply companies and a Royal Garrison Artillery. In all, 22 companies were required - the desire being to "secure personnel of a similar stamp" as those in the Bermuda Artillery Militia Siege Battery sent to France and the West Indies contingent.⁹⁷

Recruiting in West Africa was however fraught with difficulties. The Colonial Office feared that West Africans would be "murdered by France's winter." Commander Henderson of the Intelligence Department, War Office, argued that Sierra Leoneans "would die like flies" in Mesopotamia, but because Nigerians were not suitable for the work in question, "the most probable source of supply...was from among the Kroo

men of Sierra Leone and Liberia." Though Wilkinson was sure that ordinary carriers could be recruited from Sierra Leone,⁹⁹ the rates of pay and separation allowances proposed by the War Office were considered insufficient for the Kroo.¹⁰⁰

Above all, the Colonial Office found the much vaunted idea about large populations living in West Africa, chimerical. The season itself was not propitious; it was harvest time in most of the colonies and volunteers were not forthcoming. Only 22 were secured from Ibadan, Oyo and Oshogbo in Nigeria and in Sierra Leone where the bulk of the population was engaged in agriculture, Mr Ellis was doubtful of any success.¹⁰¹ The Colonial Office's preoccupation with utilising the manpower resources of West Africa was to arouse the suspicion's of Captain Harfood, who pointed to the danger of infecting Africans with disease in Europe.¹⁰²

By December 1916 however, the War Office had concluded that West Africans were particularly suitable for work with the I.W.T. and the Royal Engineers in Mesopotamia. Captain Andrews was therefore despatched to Sierra Leone to raise 1,500 men for the purpose.¹⁰³ Recruits raised were to be divided into six companies of 250 each. Enlisted as labour companies of the Royal Engineers, I.W.T., they were not required for combat. Their engagement was to last throughout the war though it could be terminated sooner. They were to be paid at the rate of £2 a month, two thirds being deferred pay, payable on discharge. This consolidated rate was to cover all allowances -separation, family and dependants -

except rations, uniforms and quarters. The men were also to receive a gratuity not exceeding £12 in cases of disablement to be paid, in accordance with the degree and duration of the injury, to their next of kin in the event of death.¹⁰⁴

Many factors accounted for the dependence on Sierra Leonean labour for river work. It was doubtful whether men from the Gold Coast or Nigeria would volunteer for service in Mesopotamia. The people of the Niger Delta in Nigeria were written off as "the bush native type and the idea of putting them into uniforms...is preposterous." Though these sentiments may have been exaggerated, Lugard was convinced that "the Kroo boys are by far the most likely source..." He therefore urged the War Office to increase their pay from £2 which was based on the rates offered to the Cape Labour Battalions.¹⁰⁵

In May 1917, 978 men left Sierra Leone for Mesopotamia¹⁰⁶ on the vessel Ivy. The ship called at Dar-es-Salaam where the Gold Coast Regiment and the Gambia Company disembarked. Calling initially at Karachi in July 1917, a detachment of 168 left for Basra in August, and once the twin problems of cholera and beri-beri were contained, the rest of the unit left for Mesopotamia, disembarking at Basra on 19th October. Once in Mesopotamia, the men were divided up to form crews for large paddle and stern wheel steamers, motor launches and salvage barges. Others attended lectures and received instructions at the I.W.T. school on marine engines and were trained as drivers of motor launches. Many were detailed to the construction department where they moved timber, discharged barges and worked as pile drivers. At Nahr Umar,

22 miles above Basra, some did excellent work discharging large ocean steamers and working as winchmen and stevedores in the holds. In January 1918, eight monitors of the "Fly" class, employed on the middle and upper Euphrates, were taken over by the Royal Navy and manned by the men of the unit. At the same time, small detachments stationed at Dhibban, Ramadie, Feluja and Hit, were busy loading and unloading barges.

"With the unit thus scattered on both sides of the Euphrates and Tigris, the difficulty in keeping daily records of the disposition of the detachments" was intensified. What is clear is that on 30th July, the contingent embarked for repatriation landing first at Cape Town. Together with a detachment of the Sierra Leone Carrier Corps, they worked assiduously in the thick of the influenza epidemic, erecting hospital camps at Newlands and Green Point, burying the dead at Maitland Cemetery, supplying fatigue parties to handle ordnance and providing orderlies at hospitals. The contingent finally arrived in Sierra Leone on 7th January, 1919.¹⁰⁷

THE IMPACT OF RECRUITMENT

Perhaps the most immediate consequence of carrier recruitment was the continued depletion of the revenue of the country. Because so many able bodied men were taken away to East Africa and Mesopotamia, there were fears of a possible reduction of £3,000 in the house tax in the estimates of revenue for 1918.¹⁰⁸ At a time when the power of the "sovereign is hardly more than half its value,"¹⁰⁹ the return

of consumptive carriers from East Africa was to raise the question of establishing sanatoria for the prevention of phthisis.¹¹⁰

By 29th November 1918, 3,028 carriers had returned from East Africa and £100,000 was required to pay them. Arrangements were therefore being made for the amount to be sent in silver currency¹¹¹ but the shortage of silver coins¹¹² was to play into the hands of profiteering shopkeepers who discounted currency notes and put a premium on silver. Government's response to these malpractices was to suspend the standing orders and pass a bill with stiff penalties prohibiting the discounting of currency notes.¹¹³ At the root of the problem was the aversion shown towards currency notes and the preference for silver in the dependency, in spite of government's efforts "to remove native prejudices by printed notices and verbal instructions."¹¹⁴

Whilst the deployment of carriers and labour gangs helped to reduce the crime rate in Freetown in 1918,¹¹⁵ it also exercised a baneful influence on the output of produce in Sherbro district due to serious labour shortages.¹¹⁶ Conditions were no different in Karene where the failure of the rice crop in 1918 was attributed to the dearth of labour, chiefly due to recruitment and the tendency to migrate to escape service with the Corps.¹¹⁷ In the wake of recruitment, the Admiralty faced difficulties securing the necessary labour for coaling vessels and Mr Anderson was to warn that "unless sufficient numbers are retained, the movement of transports between Australia and this country

will be seriously interfered with."¹¹⁸

By July 1918, many carriers had not yet returned from East Africa and official silence over their fate was to cause great anxiety and apprehension among friends and relatives. Such fears bred rumours of an impending rising in the Railway District from which most of the carriers came. This forced the O.C. Daru to abandon regimental exercises and to concentrate on Pendembu where about 200 "Syrians and educated natives" had taken refuge in a bungalow.¹¹⁹ The frenzied purchase of machets and the abandonment by a manager of the Bank of British West Africa of his safe containing £4,000, all tended to lend credibility to these rumours which were aggravated by reports of a pregnant woman whose "child was taken out to make medicine with which they swear and as the Mende believe in swear, none will reveal the secret."

By 21st July, the rumours had assumed diverse dimensions. Whilst according to one source, it was to be a rising among the Mende to celebrate the 1898 war, it was also to be a "war...to stop the progress of the railway" by chief Gborie of Baoma. Furthermore, the almost feverish assemblage of Poro conclaves by chiefs Farma of Panguma, Boima of Bo, Bai Coomber of Baima, Bargong of Mamboma, the chief of Pendembu and many others,¹²⁰ were intended to expel the Temnes from Laoma, Fauru, "and towns where Temnes were established". Other sources argued that the Poro meetings held in the Bambara chiefdom in the towns of Mana of Kunya, Penyo of Topombu, and Boro of Sahu as early as May 1918, were aimed at liberating these towns from the yoke of Panguma.¹²¹

In May, it was held that the unrest in the district owed its origins to a plot by chiefs Samawova, Baion, and Staffa at Lalihun to expel all Creoles and Syrians because the former took advantage of their women and because the "Syrians flogged their boys."¹²² By July the rumours came to be associated with grossly exaggerated versions of the submarine attack on Monrovia. The Pendembu alarm itself had broken out with the arrival there of Moses Allen from Liberia. Allen came with reports that Germany was winning the war, that they had burnt some Liberian towns and that they would soon attack Freetown.¹²³

D.C. Bowden at Ronietta was to describe such rumours as "a mixture of hysteria and gossip with a strong flavouring of cowardice," but he was quick to observe that "there is much discontent among the natives..." What compounded the situation was the fact that "hints have been dropped that all is not well with us in Europe..." Bowden feared that a reversal of the allied cause in Europe would lead "some of the bolder spirits among the chiefs to try conclusions with what they might deem a weakened government."

The role of the press was no less influential in magnifying any little detail that will bear an unfavourable construction as to the course of the war..."¹²⁴ By 12th July therefore, government found it could no longer afford to be complacent over the mounting disquiet among the relatives of carriers who flooded D.C. Craven's office daily with applications. What enhanced fears in the district was the spate of rumour mongering in connection with the fate of the carriers. The

D.C. on many occasions would surprisingly learn of the death of a carrier through his relatives. He then had to refer such cases to the O.C. Transport,¹²⁵ and this embarrassed him greatly.

Elsewhere in Northern Sherbro, many carriers by July had yet to receive payment due to delays in furnishing their accounts. Most of their next of kin could not be traced because many notifications of deaths were "badly prepared." The military authorities in East Africa were particularly culpable for failing to furnish returns of deaths prepared from company rolls, neither did D.C.s receive enough notice regarding the return of carriers.¹²⁶ The complexity of the rumours in the Railway District poses great difficulty for the historian seeking a connection between alleged Poro conclaves, chiefdom "palavers" and war time privations.

What is clear however is that by mid July, the discontent among relatives had become firmly wedded to the hardships brought about by the war, punctuated by the indiscriminate exactions of chiefs. The spiralling inflation in the district and the high prices of European goods prevented people from buying freely and due to the early rains, the rice crop in the district was a particularly bad one in 1918 and "ought to be carefully watched."¹²⁷ To compound the situation chief (Madam) Humonyha of Kenema in the district was imposing rice levies on the people and by so doing, precipitated a rebellious spirit at Sumbuya. At Sembehun, Paramount Chief Suluku had been collecting money to purchase a car and the people objected to the impositions on them.

Events in Liberia were also crucial in fuelling unrest in the district and elsewhere. D.C. Addison at Bonthe, Northern Sherbro suspected that pro-German feelings in Liberia, where the British were blamed for the poor prices of produce and the scarcity of spirits and tobacco, may have spread into the Protectorate, where the people were not averse to using the occasion as a pretext for venting their objections to the "unauthorised coition between their wives and white men." At a time when the high prices of liquor and sugar were breeding "a certain amount of discontent" in the Railway District, Krio apprehensions came to centre around memories of their fate in the 1898 risings. Together with the Syrians, they "know that if anything happens they will be the first to be attacked."

Though D.C. Addison found no evidence of a Mende plot "against the white man," he agreed that "there is a feeling of unrest." No risings actually occurred, but war time privations and the unrest among relatives of carriers had clearly taken their toll on the men of the West African Regiment, who detested the cutting of wood and the clearing of ground round their barracks. At Port Loko, discipline in the detachment was bad. They flouted orders, "were too fond of using the butt...of a rifle on the natives, they were continually thieving and...interfered with the women of the people." They constituted such a terror that "the sight of a red cummerbund was enough to make the people drop their loads...and run into the bush."¹²⁸

THE FATE OF RETURNEES

The fate of returned carriers and labourers was not an enviable one. Up to August 1918, carriers were still being invalided home from East Africa but the very poor welcome accorded them was to arouse the anger of D.C. Bowden at Ronietta. On 4th August 1918, 300 carriers were sent to Mano "packed in goods trucks, forty in a truck...in which they could not sit down and in which travelling is of the roughest and most uncomfortable..." D.C. Bowden was convinced that such treatment would convey "the worst possible impression" for though the men had "given good service, some...their lives and many their health, it seems a poor welcome...to send them to their homes in trucks used...for conveyance of cattle..." What made their plight so lamentable was the fact that most of them were "unlettered and unable to voice a grievance."¹²⁹ The General Manager Railway, could only plead shortage of rolling stock.¹³⁰ It was apparently "ill treatment" of this kind that the Reformer referred to when it argued that the Black man had derived no real benefit by shedding his blood in the European war.¹³¹

Long before the end of hostilities in East Africa, government had decided that returnees were to be sent back to their respective villages with their pay. They were not to be allowed to "linger in Freetown where they would inevitably spend their wages in a variety of unprofitable ways." Government had to be extremely cautious in resettling them. They had been supplied by their chiefs and headmen and were they to be removed from traditional discipline, it was feared that recruiting would be rendered "more difficult and

uncertain" in future.¹³² Returnees were entitled to keep their uniforms but all articles similar to those worn by the military or Court Messengers were to be surrendered.¹³³

By March 1918, many who served in East Africa from Ronietta had returned to the district and had been paid but this was the exception rather the rule,¹³⁴ for though 69 carriers had returned between August and November 1917, only nine had received payment.¹³⁵ Many returnees found themselves heavily indebted to "King" George who was well placed to benefit from the advances paid to carriers. Of the 22 returned in August, 15 owed the "King" the sum of £24.15s which they had borrowed from him "...apart from the chop supplied to the men...for which...George Cummings is entitled to draw 3d per day per man."¹³⁶ District Commissioners were responsible for sending the carriers back to their towns but the difficulties encountered in despatching them and the problems of identification were to cause serious delays in payment. This was particularly so at Pujehun where by 24th December, only three carriers could be identified on the list sent by the Colonial Secretary.

By 4th January 1918, Massallay of Pejeh, Pejeh Chiefdom, Murinama of Lahun, Kpaka Chiefdom and Moriwuru of Gisiwuru Makpli Chiefdom, had been waiting at Pujehun for over one month for their pay. The same was true of six other carriers at Moyamba, Ronietta District.¹³⁷ By 12th July 1918, nine carriers were still to receive their pay and were constantly visiting the D.C.'s office at Pujehun.¹³⁸ Matters were further complicated by the failure to get particulars of the

men from the nominal rolls supplied by the Army Service Corps and this made it even more difficult to effect payment to chiefs who had supplied carriers.¹³⁹

Closely related to these problems was the tendency by certain officials to misappropriate monies owed to carriers. Mr. Vergette was found guilty of embezzling £97/19/1, "being interest on certain sums drawn by him from the Colonial Treasury in respect of the estate of deceased carriers."¹⁴⁰ Not least important was the fact that many carriers had the same names. Due to these problems, payment was delayed even up to 1920. By April 1920, Gigi and Mori Nama of Kpanga and Kpaka Chiefdoms respectively (in Northern Sherbro) were yet to receive their full wages. The G.O.C. Sierra Leone was to deplore "the inconvenience and hardship caused to these men by sending them back without any pay sheets." He therefore recommended that each man be paid an advance of £2 pending receipt of their papers.¹⁴¹

The problem of paying carriers was further compounded by the confusion which erupted over their identity discs. They had left Freetown with locally issued identity discs, the numbers of which were entered in the records in Sierra Leone. In East Africa, it was found that these numbers coincided with those of others in that theatre of war. They were therefore issued with fresh discs and new numbers, but up to May 1918, no papers concerning this change had been received in Sierra Leone.

Matters were not helped by the tendency of carriers to gamble

away their discs,¹⁴² and to adopt nick names.¹⁴³ The authorities also had to contend with trouble makers who, "having been paid off, have by some means possessed themselves of particulars of men to whom money is due and are unable to claim it, and represent themselves as the persons entitled to payment."¹⁴⁴ A major problem confronting the authorities was determining the legal heirs of carriers like Soriba of J Company who had slave mothers.¹⁴⁵

Like the men of the Sierra Leone Battalion and other units, government was faced with the problem of finding "suitable work...or some help" for returnees. Ansumana for example, had lost a leg in East Africa and was consequently discharged as unfit for service. By 23rd August 1918, government found it difficult to honour his request for "help to enable him to live," because as a carrier, he "can claim no pension or gratuity." Ansumana's case was however considered in the Legislative Council "with sympathy," Wilkinson being requested to take the matter up with the Secretary of State. Bureaucratic hurdles of this nature constituted severe set backs to the fortunes of returned carriers, at a time when "every assistance is being extended to the families of European officers...and...the more poorly paid European and native officers who are suffering hardship through the increased cost of living."¹⁴⁶

The fate of African Medical Corps dressers was no different from the carriers'. Ralph Smith, nephew of Chief Kangaju of Moyamba, Ronietta District, spent 18 months as a dresser with the Corps in East Africa. In January 1919, he was seeking

employment because "I have come to my country having nothing to do..." but there was "no vacancy to which you can be appointed" was the reply of the Colonial Secretary.¹⁴⁷ Even his application for war bonus was rejected.¹⁴⁸ Local Matter files for 1919 in the Sierra Leone Archives are replete with applications for employment and war bonus by men from the Inland Water Transport. It was the mounting tide of unemployment and government's apparent discriminatory approaches to the grant of war bonus that was inter alia, the trigger for industrial disputes in the turbulent days of 1919.¹⁴⁹

Official attitude to the men of the Carrier Corps was far from encouraging. In 1920, Wilkinson, District Commissioners and members of the Executive Council advised against the award of the British War Medal in bronze to the carriers because of the difficulty in the preparation of medal rolls. Milner was however convinced that uniform action was to be adopted throughout the East and West African Colonies and Protectorates. He therefore urged the grant of silver medals to all gun carriers and machine gun carriers who served with the W.A.F.F. in the Cameroons, Togoland and East Africa and any carrier similarly enlisted in, and on the establishment of the W.A.F.F. The bronze medal was to be awarded to men who served as machine gun porters, stretcher-bearers, interpreters, signal porters and scouts.¹⁵⁰ By 1930 a decision had been taken to commemorate the memory of 795 carriers who died in East Africa. Unlike the men of the W.A.F.F., their names were not to be engraved on the cenotaph and this was excused on the grounds of economy.¹⁵¹

The fate of the returnees back home was rendered even more precarious by their experiences in East Africa and Mesopotamia. If carriers and labourers were less exposed to fire power at the front, perhaps their most gruelling experience was the unmitigating spread of disease among them. In July 1917, the Sierra Leone contingent of the Inland Water Transport had to be quarantined due to the outbreak of chicken pox among the Gold Coast Regiment on board the Ivy. This was accompanied by an outbreak of cholera (which claimed 29 lives) and beri beri at Karachi.

In Mesopotamia, their efficiency was impaired by the outset of winter and in spite of the excellent clothing supplied, bronchitis and pneumonia caused 30 deaths among the men. On 30th July 1918 when the contingent embarked for repatriation, B Company had to be segregated because of an outbreak of small pox¹⁵² and many like Privates Benjamin, Momo and Tommy succumbed to the spread of disease at Basra.¹⁵³ Conditions were not any different among the men of the Carrier Corps in East Africa, one company of which had to be quarantined before joining the Nigerian Brigade.¹⁵⁴ Because they had not been vaccinated, most were vulnerable to smallpox¹⁵⁵ and this compounded the incidence of disease among the men of the I.W.T.¹⁵⁶ By September 1917, there were reports of high rates of mortality among carriers from Sierra Leone and Lagos due chiefly to chronic amoebic dysentery.¹⁵⁷ In the main, the complications resulting from the disease-ridden conditions in East Africa, Mesopotamia and Basra were taken to Freetown in their most malignant forms. By March 1918, there was much evidence of disease among invalided carriers

from East Africa and labourers from Mesopotamia. The hospital at Mount Aureol abounded in many incurable cases with carriers like Margai and Dauda dying in May,¹⁵⁸ whilst a large number suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis.¹⁵⁹

With large numbers of men weakened by disease contracted whilst on military service, the problems of health and sanitation in wartime Sierra Leone were to be considerably magnified through the outbreaks of epidemics in 1916 and 1918.

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29. *ibid*, War Office to G.O.C.-in-charge, East Africa 1/3/17, SECRET.
30. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/25969 - Annual Report Northern Sherbro, 1917.
31. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/29256 - Annual Report Karene District 1917.
32. *ibid* - Annual Report Port Loko Sub-District.
33. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. WD 177/17 - Lists of carriers, 19/11/17 and 30/11/17.
34. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No. 131, M.P. D.C. Railway 18/19 - Annual Report Railway District 1918. See also P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/18879.
35. P.R.O. C.O. 445/39/44125 - Enclosure to despatch, W.A.F.F., S.L. 17/8/17; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D. 60/17 - Lieutenant Reaney, Acting O.C. "E" Company Carrier Corps, Mano to Colonial Secretary, 20/4/17.
36. P.R.O. C.O. 267/576/61907 - Wilkinson to Walter Long, S.L. Conf. 24/11/17.
37. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Secret 13/17 - D.C. Ronietta to Colonial

Secretary, 3/5/17; Acting Colonial Secretary to D.C. Ronietta, 2/5/17.

38. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. 12/3/08; see also S.L. Conf. 29 MPC 55/10.

39. P.R.O. C.O. 445/41/16462 - B.B. Cubitt to Under Secretary of State 29/3/17 0165.

40. *ibid*, Telegram, Walter Long to Wilkinson, 2/4/17. W.A.F.F., East Africa.

41. P.R.O. C.O. 445/41/17115 - "Fifth Report on Recruiting in West Africa, 5/2/17, 27/ADR/W.A.

42. Sierra Leone Annual Report 1908, p.60 (F.B.C. Library).

43. Military Report on the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone Vol. 1, 1933 (War Office, London 1933) p.118 (F.B.C. Library).

44. *ibid*, Chapter 2, Section 2 (XVI) November to December 1915 p.49.

45. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Secret 13/17 - Acting Colonial Secretary to D.C. Ronietta 2/5/17.

46. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Lieutenant C.J. Lees Schultze - "The Sierra Leone Carrier Corps in East Africa," Encl. E.

47. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/40857 - Telegram, Wilkinson to Secretary of State, 23/8/18.

48. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Koinadugu 29/18 - Colonial Secretary to Wilkinson. n.d.

49. P.R.O. C.O. 445/42/48141 - W.A.F.F. East Africa, 27/9/17.

50. P.R.O. C.O. 445/42/27100 - Haywood - "Recruiting in West Africa" SECRET, 2/5/17.

51. S.L.W.N. 9/3/12.

52. There was then in Sierra Leone a total of 440,000 Mendes with 220,000 males, 330,000 Temnes with 165,000 males, 106,000 Sherbros with 53,000 males, 220,000 Limbas with 100,000 males. Other groups totalled 250,000 with 125,000 males.

53. P.R.O. C.O. 445/42/27100 - Haywood - "Recruiting in West Africa" SECRET 2/5/17.

54. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Lieutenant C.J. Lees Shultze - "The Sierra Leone Carrier Corps in East Africa," Encl. E.

55. P.R.O. CAB 45/113 - C.V. Owens - "Sierra Leone troops in the Great War 1914-1918, Summary of Operations for War Office

Military Handbook," December 1931.

56. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/29256 - Annual Report Karene District 1917.

57. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Secret 3/17 - D.C. Pujehun to Colonial Secretary 2/2/17.

58. *ibid*, D.C. Northern Sherbro to Colonial Secretary 5/2/17.

59. *ibid*, D.C. Northern Sherbro to Colonial Secretary 9/2/17.

60. *ibid*, D.C. Kenema to Colonial Secretary 2/2/17.

61. *ibid*, D.C. Moyamba to Colonial Secretary 3/2/17.

62. *ibid*, D.C. Karene to Colonial Secretary 5/2/17.

63. *ibid*, Colonial Secretary to D.C. Pujehun, 8/2/17.

64. *ibid*, Assistant D.C., Kenema to Colonial Secretary 5/2/17.

65. *ibid*, Colonial Secretary to D.C. Kenema, 8/2/17.

66. *ibid*, Colonial Secretary to D.C. Moyamba 9/2/17.

67. *ibid*, D.C. Pujehun to Colonial Secretary, 12/2/17; Colonial Secretary to D.C. Pujehun, 12/2/17.

68. *ibid*, Colonial Secretary to D.C. Batkanu, 22/2/17.

69. *ibid*, Colonial Faunce, W.A.R. O.C. Troops, West Africa to Wilkinson, 20/2/17.

70. *ibid*, Colonial Secretary to D.C. Moyamba 13/2/17.

71. *ibid*, D.C. Karene to Colonial Secretary 14/2/17.

72. *ibid* D.C. Kemp to Colonial Secretary 14/2/17.

73. *ibid*, D.C. Pujehun to Colonial Secretary, 12/2/17.

74. *ibid* D.C. Stanley to Colonial Secretary, 24/2/17.

75. *ibid*, Colonial Secretary to D.C. Kenema, 12/4/17; Colonial Secretary to D.C. Moyamba 12/4/17.

76. *ibid*, D.C. Kenema to Colonial Secretary, 12/4/17; D.C. Moyamba to Colonial Secretary 13/4/17; Aide-de-Camp to Wilkinson, to G.A. Boddam-Whetham, D.A.A. and Q.M.G., 13/4/17.

77. *ibid*, Walter Long to Wilkinson, 2/4/17; Colonial Secretary to all D.C.'s, 3/4/17.

78. *ibid*, D.C. Kemp to Colonial Secretary 4/4/17.

79. *ibid*, D.C. Karene to Colonial Secretary 7/4/17.

80. *ibid.* D.C. Pujehun to Colonial Secretary 7/4/17; D.C. Pujehun to Colonial Secretary 14/4/17.
81. *ibid.* D.C. Hollins to Colonial Secretary, 7/4/17.
82. *ibid.* D.C. Waterloo to Colonial Secretary 10/4/17.
83. *ibid.* D.C. Railway to Colonial Secretary 20/4/17; D.C. Pujehun to Colonial Secretary, 25/4/17; Acting Colonial Secretary to D.C. Pujehun 26/4/17.
84. *ibid.* D.C. Karene to Colonial Secretary 14/5/17, 10/5/17; O.C. No. 2 Coy Carriers, to Colonial Secretary 16/5/17.
85. *ibid.* D.C. Karene to Colonial Secretary 23/5/17; The Vagrancy Ordinance, Regulation No. 12, p. 2058, of Volume 5 of the Ordinances empowered "tribal" rulers in Freetown to return "any Temne man who has left his chiefdom in contravention of the native law."
86. *ibid.* D.C. Port Loko to D.C. Karene, 11/6/17.
87. *ibid.* Acting Colonial Secretary to all D.C.'s except Sherbro and Headquarter districts, 26/6/17.
88. *ibid.* D.C. Hollins Kabala, to Colonial Secretary 15/5/17; O.C. to Colonial Secretary, 25/5/17.
89. P.R.O. C.O. 445/39/35856 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 2/7/17, W.A.F.F. S.L. Conf.
90. P.R.O. C.O. 445/39/31551 - B. Moutray Read, Acting Chief Commissioner, Northern Territories to Acting Governor, A R Slater, 30/3/17 - Encl in W.A.F.F. Gold Coast Conf 29/5/17.
91. P.R.O. C.O. 445/39/62032 - "Report on Reservists 1916" W.A.F.F. S.L. 24/11/17.
92. P.R.O. C.O. 445/39/60110 - Mr Read to Secretary, War Office 6/12/17, W.A.F.F. Nigeria/East Africa.
93. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Northern Sherbro 18/17 - D.C. W.B. Stanley to Colonial Secretary 11/2/17.
94. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Secret 3/17 - Telegram, Secretary of State to Wilkinson, 22/8/17; Acting Colonial Secretary to D.A.A. and Q.M.G. 28/8/17.
95. P.R.O. C.O. 554/28/48183 - "Memorandum on steps taken to increase the supply of coloured troops, coloured labour and on their use by the naval and military authorities." Miscellaneous No.331 Confidential; P.R.O. C.O. 537/952/42950. Mr Read to Secretary War Office n.d. September 1916.
96. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Secret 12/16 - Wilkinson to Bonar Law, 15/4/16, 17/4/16.
97. P.R.O. C.O. 537/952/42950 - B.B. Cubitt to Under Secretary of State 8/9/16, 121/8655 (S.D.Z.)

98. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/44424 - Mr Read to George Fiddes 20/9/16, Lugard to Mr Harding.
99. *ibid*, - Telegram, Wilkinson to Secretary of State 16/9/16.
100. P.R. C.O. 537/952/42950 - These rates were laid down in Army Order No. 5, 1916 for the British West Indies Regiment and were regarded as "utterly inapplicable to West Africans.
101. *ibid*.
102. P.R.O. C.O. 554/32/61940 - Captain Harfood - "The employment of the races of Tropical Africa in Europe considered from the Health standpoint," 23/12/16.
103. P.R.O. C.O. 445/37/59718 - Instructions to Major (temporary Lt. Col) A H W Haywood," War Office, December 1916.
104. P.R.O. C.O. 554/31/40535 - B B Cubitt, War Office to Under Secretary of State, 121/3/169 (Q M G 2D) 24/8/16.
105. P.R.O. C.O. 554/31/50251 - B B Cubitt to Under Secretary of State. 121/3/169, (M.R.3) 19/10/16.
106. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/40857 - Telegram, Wilkinson to Secretary of State, 23/8/18.
107. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Major E S Bosworth, O.C. W.A. Contingent, I.W.T. R.E., "Report on services of the I.W.T., West Africa Contingent," Encl. D; For the influenza epidemic in Cape Town, see W.M.M.S. 105th Annual Report, 1918, p.85 (S.O.A.S.) West Africa Magazine, 29/3/19.
108. P.R.O. C.O. 267/576/6218 - Despatch No. 324, 27/11/17.
109. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/23280 - F A Miller, President of the Sierra Leone Civil Service et al, to Walter Long, 16/4/18.
110. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/16810 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 15/3/18.
111. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Telegraphic Despatches - Sierra Leone Telegraphic, Wilkinson to Secretary of State, 7/1/19.
112. Due to the sharp fall in commodity prices coins had become surplus to requirements in the colonies. The West African Currency Board could not afford to store silver coinage locally and pay out its face value in London. It therefore had to ship it. From 1915 onwards, the Royal Mint argued it could not supply the Board's requirements due to an increasing demand for silver in Britain itself. Currency notes were thus sent out as an emergency measure. See J.B. Lyons - The West African Currency Board, 1912-1962 (Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd, 1962) p.20. See also A.A. Lawal - "West African Currency Board Earnings and the distribution of its income, 1912-1945" in Odu 35, January 1989.
113. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/4877 - Wilkinson to Walter Long

8/1/19 - "Discount on Currency Notes and Premium on Silver Prohibition Ordinance No 18 of 1919, Colony of Sierra Leone, 31/12/18," Government Printing Office Freetown, M.P. S.S.T. 63/18. 1/19; See also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. Conf. No. 12, 8/1/19.

114. On this point, see Allan Macphee - The Economic Revolution in British West Africa (George Routledge and Sons 1926) p.244.

115. P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/28863 - Annual Report, Sierra Leone Police Force 1918.

116. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/16811 - Annual Report Sherbro District 1917 and S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No. 160, D.C. S.25/19-Annual Report Sherbro District 1918.

117. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl in S.L. No. 176. D.C.K. 25/19 - Annual Report Karene District 1918 and P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/23343, 3/4/19; P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/29256 - Annual Report Karene District, 1917.

118. P.R.O. C.O. 445/41/2737 - J.W. Anderson to Under Secretary of State 13/1/17, M.O. 513, W.A.F.F. S.L./East Africa.

119. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 78/18 - Acting Colonial Secretary to all D.C.'s, 6/7/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 73/18 - O.C. Frontiers to G.S.O., 21/5/18.

120. *ibid* - Letter by "one settler at Bo," to the D.C. Railway District, 19/6/18.

121. *ibid* - Information by M Qaiteh *et al* as to rumours of an intended native rising in the Railway District.

122. *ibid* - Enquiry into the cause of alarm among Europeans and Creoles of Pendembu on the nights of the 9th, 19th and 20th May, 1918.

123. *ibid* - Acting Colonial Secretary to Chamber of Commerce 6/7/18; D.C. Railway District to Colonial Secretary, 26/6/18.

124. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 78/18 - D.C. Bowden to Colonial Secretary 6/7/18.

125. *ibid* - D.C. Craven, Railway District to Colonial Secretary 11/7/18.

126. *ibid* - D.C. W.B. Stanley, Northern Sherbro to Colonial Secretary, 12/7/18.

127. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/18879 - Annual Report Railway District 1918.

128. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 78/18 - D.C.W. Addison, to Colonial Secretary, 16/7/18. See also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 68/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Petition 11/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonial Secretary 198/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Koinadugu 16/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Miscellaneous 81/17.

129. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Ronietta 50/18 - D.C. Bowden to Colonial Secretary, 5/8/18.
130. ibid - Mr Morcom to Colonial Secretary 10/8/18; See also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 63/18.
131. The Reformer Vol.1 No.1 7/8/20. Only one disintegrating copy of this paper survives in the Sierra Leone Archives. This in fact seems to have been the only edition and was published by W.C. Labour, (Proprietor and printer) of 39 Upper Waterloo Street.
132. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Northern Sherbro 18/17 - D.C. W.B. Stanley to Colonial Secretary 11/2/17; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. M.P. Confidential 24/18.
133. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 177/17 - Colonial Secretary to D.C. Port Loko 14/12/17.
134. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. No.164 M.P. D.C. Ronietta 11/19, 27/3/19; P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/22154 - Annual Report, Ronietta District 1918.
135. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 177/17 - Captain, Army Service Corps to Colonial Secretary, 19/11/17.
136. ibid - Captain, Army Service Corps to Colonial Secretary 4/12/17.
137. ibid - D.C. Pujehun to Colonial Secretary, 24/12/17; D.C. Ronietta to Colonial Secretary, 22/1/18.
138. ibid - D.C. Stanley to Colonial Secretary, 12/7/18.
139. ibid - Colonial Secretary to D.C. Moyamba 8/1/18.
140. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. M.P. Confidential 37/19 - Acting Governor Evelyn to Milner, 6/8/19.
141. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 177/19 - C Hayes O.C. Accounts Adjustment Branch, Dar-es-Salaam to Lieutenant Stanley, Freetown 28/4/19; D.C. Northern Sherbro to Colonial Secretary, 12/4/20.
142. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 52/18 - Major General C W Thompson, Commanding the Troops West Africa, to Secretary, War Office, 4/5/18. For problems relating to identity discs in East Africa, see Military Labour Bureau Handbook (Standard P & P Works, Nairobi and Mombassa, 1917) enclosure - East African Carrier Corps Papers MSS.468, Royal Commonwealth Society Library, (R.C.S.L.) London; Standing Orders and Regulations for the Forces in British East Africa, 1915. (R.C.S.L.)
143. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 85/18 - D C Bowden Ronietta to Colonial Secretary 25/6/18.
144. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 63/18 - Mr Turnbull, Public Works Department, to Colonial Secretary 21/1/20.
145. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonies 49/18.

146. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/44591 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 23/8/18.
147. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Matter 15/19 - Ralph Smith to Colonial Secretary, n.d. and Colonial Secretary to Smith, 17/1/19.
148. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Matter 16/19 - Ralph Smith to Colonial Secretary 9/1/19 and Acting Colonial Secretary to Smith, 13/1/19.
149. See S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Matter Files 1919 and in particular, L.M. 368/19 - L.A. Archer, Agent Coaling Company to Colonial Secretary, 17/7/19 and S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Commissioner of Police 54/19.
150. P.R.O. C.O. 445/50/4477 - Wilkinson to Milner, 13/1/20, W.A.F.F. S.L. No.2 and H J Read to the Secretary, War Office 21/5/20.
151. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Open Policy Files on the Navy and Royal W.A.F.F. N 25/30 - Principal Secretary, Imperial War Graves Commission to Colonial Secretary 20/1/38. 8/27/13/ S.1. Elsewhere, the number of deaths among the Corps is put at 852. See G W T Hodges "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa 1914-1918" in J.A.H. XIX, 1 (1978) p.116
152. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Major E S Bosworth, O.C. West Africa Contingent I.W.T. R.E., "Report on the services of I.W.T., Encl. D.
153. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonies 13/18, Colonies 14/18 and Colonies 17/18.
154. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43238 - Lt C J Lees Schultze - "The Sierra Leone Carrier Corps in East Africa;" Encl. E.
155. P.R.O. C.O. 445/42/35432 - Telegram, G O C East Africa to Secretary, War Office 2821 M.D. n.d. in W.A.F.F./K.A.R., 23/7/17.
156. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 177/17 - Captain, D.A.A. and Q.M.G. West Africa to Colonial Secretary, 17/11/17.
157. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Local Miscellaneous 1917 - G.O.C. Cape Town to General, Sierra Leone, 1/9/17. See also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 138/17, 66/17 and 150/17.
158. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 28/18 - Major J A Black, S M O to Military Headquarters 1/3/18 and Major Weston a/D.A.A. and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary, 23/5/18.
159. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 16/18.

Chapter 4: SANITATION, DISEASE AND WAR

The periods between April 1915 to June 1916, and August to November 1918, were trying ones for Sierra Leone. This was due to the outbreak of small pox and the influenza pandemic respectively. This part is therefore concerned with the impact of disease in Sierra Leone in war time. Because many factors made the dependency particularly vulnerable to the spread of disease, the approach here is predicated on the socio-economic model of disease causation¹ in Sierra Leone. In order to appreciate the spread of disease in war time, there is a need to examine the problems of sanitation and public health, official policy towards health and the etiology of disease in Sierra Leone. It is here posited that in the period under review, initiatives mainly rested with colonial governors who not infrequently clashed with the Colonial Office over many a matter of policy revolving around colonial interests on the one hand, and imperial interests on the other.

SANITATION AND HEALTH - 1916

The history of sanitation in Sierra Leone between 1897 and 1918 could be gleaned from "a series of reports on the sanitary condition of the city and recommendations for its improvement." In 1898, Dr. Prout, then Medical Officer of Health submitted to the municipality a report on the "Sanitary Department and the Health of the city for the year 1897" which contained many recommendations for improving the

sanitary conditions "few of which have however been carried into effect." Sir Ronald Ross, famous for recognising the anopheline mosquito as a vector of malaria,² was to lament in his book The Prevention of Malaria that so little was being done in British possessions to combat the disease. Even "in Sierra Leone where the disease was the principal enemy of the Colony little had been done," Ross observed.

By 1902, in spite of his campaign against the "anopheline enemy" at Freetown, in spite of "the object lessons given" and the assistance rendered by men sent out from England, the work was stopped for financial reasons and "local authorities did not appear very anxious to continue."³ These considerations accounted for Dr. Alexander's objections to the government adhering to the International Sanitary Convention signed in Paris on 17th January 1912. Alexander's objections were based on the lack of efficient drainage and sewage disposal in Freetown, the absence of an organised port and medical service necessary for the reception of a ship, "whatever its health condition" and for determining whether such a ship had "undergone the definite and laid down sanitary measures," and the lack of an efficiently equipped bacteriological laboratory.

Alexander was convinced that the advantage the Colony stood to enjoy from being a party to the convention would not be commensurate with the expenses involved in observing the rules of the convention. Rather, he urged the government to "observe" only those portions relating to the notification of plague, cholera and yellow fever as well as to exercise its

discretion as to the extent to which notification was to be made to countries which had no consular representatives in the Colony and between which and Sierra Leone, there was no direct communication.⁴ On the eve of war therefore, "it cannot be said that the sanitary outlook of Sierra Leone will be particularly bright for some time to come..."⁵

By 1916, the organisation and planning which had characterised the early settlement of the Colony had been abandoned by successive administrations. R.J. Wilkinson who succeeded Merewether as governor on 9th March 1916,⁶ was struck by "the squalid appearance of the Freetown streets." In a lengthy despatch to the Colonial Office, he deprecated the "erection of obstructive and unsightly buildings" which "has shut off the streets from the sea view and sea breezes which they were intended to enjoy." Wilkinson was most critical of previous administrations for allowing the erection of verandahs and arcades to narrow the roadways and for neglecting the proper alignment of the streets. The Public Works Department was equally culpable for the rather erratic manner in which the water-mains were laid. Obstructing the main roadway and rendering it dangerous to wheeled traffic, it meant that the mains would have to be relaid again at very great expense "if any comprehensive scheme of roads is carried out."

These conditions of squalor which characterised the Colony were not lost on concerned members of the public. A deputation of the Native Produce Dealers Association called the new governor's attention to the insanitary conditions

then prevailing at "Saw pit steps," a very important landing place in the business quarter. Wilkinson found the whole place "littered with filth...The stench was disgusting and the condition of the whole of this business resort was disgraceful." According to the Senior Sanitary Officer, the squalor in many other parts of Freetown was "indescribable."⁷ The insanitary condition of Smythe Street in the west end was at once "loathesome and disease creating...the maintaining of a mosquito factory and all its incidental diseases; the establishment of a frog depot; the stagnant pools... and all the evils attendant to health and human life from such conditions cannot be overlooked..."⁸ Conditions at Right Path Street in the east were not very different.⁹

At Brookfields, work on the drainage begun in 1911, was by 1916, still marking time. Between 1914 and 1915 mosquito larvae cases in the Freetown Court numbered 1,333. The water supply of the Railway Reservation at Cline Town from the mountain torrent, usually liable to pollution, had to be replaced by that from the Freetown water supply. During this period also a total of 4,928 rats were taken to the Colonial Hospital by an employed rat catcher, paid for at the rate of one penny each.¹⁰

Conditions in the Protectorate were far from satisfactory. Only in 1915 was the Public Health (Protectorate) Ordinance, the first of such ordinances, enacted but this merely placed sanitation in the Protectorate on "a definite legal footing" though it replaced the old system of "advise and persuasion." If Bo in the Railway District was declared a sanitary

district under the Ordinance,¹¹ Bonthe was characterised by "bad drainage bad water, dusty streets" and "mosquitoes are abundant."¹²

Although by 1916, much had been achieved through rigid sanitary inspection, the execution of minor sanitary works, and the introduction and subsequent increase of pipe-borne water supply, it was obvious that the lack of funds for drainage work, (surface and sub-soil) failure to adopt the pan latrine system universally, the absence of a water carriage system and the problems associated with the closure of wells in order to make the pipe-borne supply the only water available, were bound to render conditions unsatisfactory for a long time.¹³

OFFICIAL POLICY TOWARDS HEALTH AND DISEASE

In examining official policy towards sanitation and disease in Sierra Leone during the war, the chief variables to be considered are - the problem of financial constraints; the perennial bickering among respective Sanitary and Health authorities in the Colony; the racial ethos that had come to dominate the medical service and which ensured a considerable dearth of medical personnel to meet an emergency and above all, the conflict between imperial and colonial interests.

Official policy towards sanitation and disease, at least up to the outbreak of smallpox in 1915 was essentially ad hoc and the already lukewarm commitment towards health matters shown by the Colonial office was compounded during the war by the economic and manpower needs of the empire. Furthermore

the inconclusive results of researches into the etiology of certain diseases in Sierra Leone, did not enable the authorities to map out any plan of action. Dr. E.T. Ward, Medical officer of Health found that the outbreak of beri-beri in the Freetown prison between September 1912 and March 1913, was a function of an exclusive diet of polished white rice.¹⁴ Once embroiled in war, the Colonial Office was to relegate the health interests of Sierra Leone to second place. Only with the outbreak first of a small pox epidemic and next the influenza pandemic were officials in the Colonial Office alerted to the urgent health needs of the dependency.

The need to meet the demands of war time, was to lead officialdom to eschew more scientific approaches to combat the diffusion of disease and to pass wide ranging legislation. In August 1914, when sleeping sickness threatened the country, an Order-in-Council was passed adding the sickness to the list of diseases for which persons could be compulsorily arrested and confined to a contagious disease hospital.¹⁵ Then for the first time in 1914 a Registration Office was opened at Cline Town to register births and deaths among the Muslim community. The Protectorate portion of Headquarter District was also merged with the Ronietta Registration District.¹⁶

Financial constraints were also important in determining official policy. Although the Sierra Leone administration had begun to consider the question of disinfecting ships calling at Freetown harbour well before the outbreak of war,

nothing concrete had been done by August 1914. By 1915 when the question came up again, the financial position of the Colony made it impossible to purchase a clayton apparatus, a barge and a launch, or to make provision for the necessary increase in the European and African establishments in the Sanitary Department, in the estimates for 1916. Officials at the Colonial Office argued that "Sierra Leone will have to do without this apparatus whether it is essential or not."¹⁷ Indeed the constraints of economy imposed by the war and the deficiency in the facilities provided by the port were to compound the situation and make the dependency a ready target for the spread of disease in war time and as the war dragged on, the health needs of the Colony and the need to preserve imperial interests were drawn into an inevitable clash in which imperial interests took precedence.

In late 1914, Brigadier General Dobell, in charge of the Expeditionary Force in the Cameroons, began to make demands on the medical staff in Sierra Leone. In November, he requested one doctor, one nurse and three dressers. In governor Merewether's opinion, this meant "leaving some district entirely without medical assistance." He however managed to send Dr. Easmon, an African Medical officer, and engaged Dr Jarrett, a government pensioner to fill his place at the usual rate paid to professional men temporarily attached to the medical department (i.e. £1/1/0 a day plus a hammock allowance). Though he approved of Miss L. Stevens, the matron at the Colonial Hospital proceeding to Duala, Merewether found it impossible to send any government dresser "as the number left is already insufficient." In the

circumstances, he engaged two druggists outside the government service at the rate of 6 pence a day plus ration allowance, this "practically...on their own terms."¹⁸

Colonial office responses made it evident that imperial interests were to supersede those of the Colony. If the Governor was addressing the realities of the situation, the Colonial Office thought differently about his intentions. Many officials regarded his reluctance as another example of his "obstructive tactics" for "Rather than leave one of his districts without a Medical officer he would let the whole Cameroon expedition go to the dogs"¹⁹ they contended.

By 1915, the demands on Sierra Leone by the Colonial Office for more medical officers to be lent to the military authorities for the duration of the war, "as soon as the demands of the Cameroons Expeditionary Force came to an end," became more urgent.²⁰ Between August 1914 and December 1915, seven European medical officers had been withdrawn for service in the Cameroons - one from Freetown, one each from Batkanu, Daru, Kaballa, Kailahun, Pujehun and Waterloo. Kissy, Makeni, Moyamba, Bonthe and Bo were without medical officers. The further provision of reliefs for the officers ensured a total contribution of ten medical officers by 1915.²¹

Whilst Dr. Rice, Principal Medical Officer felt that ten more could be released, Merewether was apprehensive about rendering the medical staff so shorthanded. Only eight European medical officers would then be left in the Colony

and "no allowance has been made for sickness" and "for dealing promptly with any epidemic which may occur. There has recently been a...serious outbreak of smallpox in the Protectorate with which the medical department...found it very difficult to cope."²²

Mr Fiddian was to put the case of the Colonial Office more succinctly against a governor whose "administration" was regarded as "lethargic" and against one which "accomplishes the minimum of results with the maximum of fiction..²³ To Fiddian, "the illness or death of an occasional European or a hundred natives in Sierra Leone would be a less evil than inadequate medical and sanitary attention for a battalion in Flanders." Whilst he admitted that there was a danger to Sierra Leone and the empire as a whole, he argued that "the danger to Sierra Leone is the less serious of the two."²⁴ Later events and the consequent shortage of medical personnel in 1916 and 1918, were to vindicate Merewether's apprehensions over the likely outbreak of disease.

The conflict between imperial and colonial interests which successfully impeded the formulation of policy over sanitary and medical matters, was to find its parallel in the constant bickering among respective sanitary and medical officers within the dependency, and which pointed to a "lack of administrative efficiency and coordination in matters of municipal government." The tendency of each department to "disregard the interest and aims of the others prompted Governor Wilkinson to recommend the appointment of "one officer or board" to take charge of municipal work; for "we

cannot have efficiency under several independent and often conflicting departments."

The situation by 1916 was calling for reform. For example whilst the Sanitary Engineer designed the dustbin the Director of Public Works repaired it and the Senior Sanitary Officer attended to scavenging. Each official was apt to "blame...the contributory negligence of the rest...it is always possible for the Senior Sanitary Officer to say that the bin is too small...and...the Sanitary Engineer...that it is not cleared out enough...And of course all departments alike can fall back on the time honoured expedient of criticising the parsimony of a government that does not give them deputies or assistants to do the work." In May 1916, Wilkinson was recommending the appointment of one officer - preferably the Sanitary Engineer to carry out all the duties of a Municipal Engineer, and another, the Medical Officer of Health, to work exclusively as the Municipal Health Officer, both being directly subordinate and responsible to the Municipal Authority.

Wilkinson found municipal work in Freetown at its worst; there were still important municipal building regulations to be drawn up as well as a comprehensive scheme for the streets and drains of Freetown. Mr. Simms in charge of all this, was accounted "a capable and ambitious officer; but a perusal of his report shows...that his mind is taken up more with the difficulties and grievances of his position than with the opportunities it has given him for most valuable work." The same was true of medical officers who wasted time on "petty

personal bickerings even where there is a small pox epidemic to combat."

Wilkinson also pointed to a "lack of continuity in policy" in contrast with India where the Municipal Engineer and the Municipal Health Officer were not independent but executive officers directly responsible to their boards. Conditions were not helped by the apparent distortions of the Sanitary experts' vision of themselves i.e. as "consultants, critics and censors (often of their predecessors' work); disregarding all financial considerations as outside their province; sacrificing "practical and cheap improvements for the sake of academic truisms" and resenting the "performance of monotonous executive duties which though unimportant in themselves give a real grasp of local conditions."²⁵

Personal idiosyncrasy of this sort was to seriously complicate the problem of "dual control" over sanitary matters, with all the potential for friction between officers.²⁶ For example, the fact that the Sanitary Engineer was attached to the P.W.D. and yet autonomous in the sense that he had under his control a Sanitary Works sub-department without a full complement of staff made it "awkward to have an officer whose duties are sharply defined."

The Sanitary Engineer urged that his "opinion be regarded as authoritative" and resented his being regarded "as a sort of emergency man to be used for any work" in the P.W.D. where the Director wanted him to act in an advisory rather than in an executive capacity.²⁷ The better part of the first half

of 1916 was therefore devoted to squabbling among sanitary and health officers, climaxing in a carefully calculated insult from Dr. Beringer (Senior Sanitary Officer) to Dr. Mayer (Acting Principal Medical Officer) who resented the "tone" in which the former had refused to acknowledge him as acting P.M.O.²⁸

Whilst smallpox raged on in Sierra Leone in 1916, and whilst Sanitary and Health officers dissipated their energies in petty squabbling, there were more serious problems to attend to. Wilkinson found that before 1916, vaccination had not been made compulsory; although this had often been proposed, it was always vetoed by the previous governor.²⁹ He therefore requested the Attorney-General to draft amendments to the vaccination law for he was sure "compulsion would become inevitable" against the background of widespread hostility towards vaccination by people in the Protectorate. If by 1916 there were no spray pumps (for spraying disinfectants) in store although there was an officer responsible for indenting for them,³⁰ the problem was further complicated by the dearth of medical officers who were few and far between. This was due to the P.M.O. and the West African Medical staff's aversion to employing African Vaccinators or doctors.³¹

The reasons for this were easy to discover and what the Weekly News construed as typically racial, was attributed to "the insatiable thirst for "albocracy" in all departments of the service."³² The evidence shows that from at least 1887 onwards (and since the Hut Tax Rebellion for which the Krios

had been blamed by officialdom) the policy of racial discrimination had become a marked feature of Anglo-Krio relations.³³ By the outbreak of war, the Krios had become the "bete-noire" of the administration and were not infrequently the victims of the exclusivist policy of officialdom with regards to recruitment in the various branches of the Colonial service - especially the West African Medical Staff.

As early as 1902, Governor King-Harman, in consultation with the P.M.O., had rejected proposals for five African medical officers to "retain their present salaries until they can be replaced by Europeans."³⁴ Official attempts to stifle indigenous talents were not lost on the press. The Weekly News was most vociferous in its denunciation of the Colonial Office's "retrogressive scheme...one so glaringly and gratuitously insulting to the national instinct of a race." The paper argued that "there are and will always be qualified medical men who have taken and will continue to take diplomas in British institutions."³⁵

By 1913, parliamentarians in Britain were taking up the cause of the African doctor, but Governor Merewether was less inclined to alter the "colour bar" which applied to almost every limb of the colonial service, though he conceded that "the young men who are educated in England...obtain good degrees and diplomas."³⁶ The Acting Principal Medical Officer found the exclusion of African practitioners, "a great hardship for men who have...succeeded in acquiring qualifications in medicine which place them on an

equality...with European doctors in general and the members of the West African Medical Staff in particular...." Yet he argued that the African medical officer was "unreliable as a systematic worker when he is independent of direct European supervision." Their inclusion in the service would therefore be "highly prejudicial to the status and prestige of the West African Medical Staff."³⁷ In the circumstances, the only recourse open to African officers, was to resign from the service, as did Dr. Renner in 1913.³⁸

By 1916 therefore when smallpox assumed epidemic proportions, the West African Medical Service was seriously depleted. Drawing upon an already diminutive medical service, large districts had to be run by medical officers who had to contend with the difficulty of keeping a balance between the curative work demanded by their hospitals and the public health exercises required in the district. Judged from the problems outlined so far it would appear that in Sierra Leone by 1916, the problem of hygiene and sanitation, seemed a largely administrative, and not a scientific one.

At the more practical level approaches to health and sanitation in the dependency were sometimes very crude and expensive. Rat collection was undertaken with an obsession unprecedented in the history of the Colony - the government paying a penny for every rat killed. Furthermore, Protectorate Chiefs "whose zeal in promoting the sanitary conditions of their chiefdoms...appeared to merit recognition" were awarded "swords" and certificates.³⁹

Whilst special censuses were organised in order to help

prepare Medical and Sanitary reports, few positive results were enjoyed by both departments.⁴⁰

THE ETIOLOGY OF DISEASE

Historians concerned with the medical history of Africa, have attributed patterns of disease inter alia to the European conquest of the continent. They argue that one of the immediate consequences of the European thrust was "epidemiological disaster." This they suggest was due to the demand for migratory labour by plantations and mines, the construction of dams, roads and railways, resettlement programmes and population mobility.⁴¹ For Prothero, man and his environment are closely linked to complex relationships which frequently present conditions of disequilibrium in which diseases flourish and health is impaired.⁴² Indeed the evidence shows that cities, which normally attract rural migrants and which also constitute the hub of transportation systems, are usually foci for the diffusion of disease. To these factors, Hartwig and Patterson have added the impact of psychological stress, with all its potential for reducing resistance to infection. Uprooted and malnourished populations were generally very vulnerable to diseases like smallpox.⁴³

The evidence for Sierra Leone yet largely untapped, would show that both internal as well as external factors accounted for the spread of disease both before and during World War 1. By the outbreak of war, the administration had every reason to be worried about congestion, which had become so marked a feature of life in Freetown, and which owed its origins to a

largely uncontrolled rural - urban migration. This phenomenon had begun to attract the attention of the press as early as 1900.⁴⁴ By 1901, many chiefs were complaining to the Governor of "the inducements offered to their young men to leave their farms and go to Freetown" where many of the unemployed lapsed into criminal habits, "peopling the hospitals and gaols."⁴⁵ By 1907, the Freetown Municipality was expressing great apprehension over the situation,⁴⁶ but the lack of clear boundaries between districts was to ensure a burgeoning "vagrant population" in Freetown on the eve of war.⁴⁷

The war itself was a major catalyst and an examination of statistical returns for Freetown, the mountain villages, the peninsula areas (Kissy, Wellington, Wilberforce, Murray Town, Tassoh, Hastings, Waterloo, Songo, Hamilton, York, Kent, Tombo and Banana Islands) and Bonthe, Koinadugu, Karene, Railway, Northern Sherbro and Ronietta districts, show a consistently steady rise in the death rate in Freetown than in any other area between 1911 and December 1914. For example, from 779 in 1913, it went up to 997 in 1914. This was mainly attributed to the influx of adult males from the Protectorate who came in search of work - for coaling and ship labour - many of whom died whilst resident in Freetown.⁴⁸ The Wesleyan Methodist Church itself was expressing concern over the increasing "evil of Sabbath desecration" by these migrants,⁴⁹ by 1914.

A brief look at conditions in the Protectorate would reveal a more graphic picture of depopulation. St. Matthew's (church)

District at Benguema "had not seen a growth in population" between 1903 and 1914 chiefly due to "deaths and emigration."⁵⁰ At Benke, "the grown-up lads and young girls" were all moving "to Freetown, to carry on their trade and branches of industry."⁵¹ In the River District and Tassoh, migration was the bane of missionary activity; by 1914/15, the district was "greatly depleted" and the same pattern in Sherbro District caused a significant fall in church receipts.⁵² As the war quickened migration to Freetown, the consequent congestion was to ensure all the makings of a disease prone capital. Migrants congregated "insanitarily in herds of some twenty...in a single shanty fit for...four lodgers," thus "rendering their...neighbourhood unhealthy..."⁵³

Elsewhere in what the Sanitary Officer described as "tenement houses" could be found some thirty or forty persons "sleeping in one house under conditions...prejudicial to health." Returning carriers from the Cameroons merely worsened the situation,⁵⁴ by their refusal to go back to the Protectorate in order to avoid chiefly abuses ranging from extortion to forced labour.⁵⁵ This apart, they themselves were to introduce chicken pox and other diseases like amoebic dysentery to an already smallpox infected country.

If by 1916 the increased scale of communication networks, served to open up the country to greater trade possibilities, these changes were often a curse in disguise as far as the transmission of disease was concerned. A few examples would suffice. By September 1912, the branch line of the railway

had been extended to Rowalla in Ronietta, the first portion having been opened to public traffic as far as Yonnibana on 1st September 1912. These developments together with the Government mailboat service, were to revolutionise trade and as traders flocked to the district, the inevitable consequence was the growth of towns like Sembehun, Yonnibana, Mano and Kangahun.⁵⁶ By 1913, the branch line had been opened to Makump and the construction of many feeder roads was begun by various chiefs in the district.⁵⁷

Up to the end of 1914, railway, road and bridge construction proceeded with relative ease and there was no significant dearth of labour for the prosecution of public works in the Protectorate.⁵⁸ Even by 1916, when the Colonial Office ordered work to stop on the export wharf,⁵⁹ Wilkinson was still battling to persuade the Colonial Office to continue the railway extension to Baga which had been abandoned because of the need to keep expenditure down in war time.⁶⁰ Positive as these developments were, the evidence would later show that railways, roads and the mushrooming trade centres were to constitute the main channels for the diffusion of disease in war time. Traders were to bring smallpox to Freetown via the railway and canoes, striking at the very heart of congested residences occupied by the labouring class.⁶¹

As if oblivious of these developments going on around them, victims of disease were prone to search for its origins in religion - in this case Islam - which by 1916 was deploring the material pursuits of the population as well as its

obsession with "women and pleasure." An "evil wind carrying sickness and death will" therefore "pass over this country and will involve every man, woman and child, freeman and all slaves great and small..." prophesied Alhaji Omaru, believed to have been "inspired from Mecca..."⁶² For many in Islamic circles, disease was the work of God - "Allah sent it, it was not man's work."⁶³ The rapid growth of Islam during this period was itself lending credence to this phenomenon of divine punishment.⁶⁴

The recourse to religion in Sierra Leone in 1916, was in part, a reflection of the psychological stress society was going through as a result of the war; and this made them even more vulnerable to the spread of disease. Food shortages also added to the crisis. In the Colony, Local Matter files were punctuated by applications for employment and complaints about the hardships brought on by the war. "Food is getting dearer,"⁶⁵ was the usual refrain by 1916. At Karene, the seat of smallpox in 1916, there was a marked "deterioration" in "the physical condition of people"⁶⁶ and in Kissi country, the plate laying gangs along the line between Pendembu and Daru were "seriously emaciated."⁶⁷ At Bo, Pendembu, Daru and Kenema, Major Farrar saw very few persons "who could be termed plump."⁶⁸ The problems of starvation therefore provided a ready ally for an already disease ridden environment.

As the Colonial Office was to discover, external factors played a great part in introducing disease to the country, and by the eve of war, the Colonial administration was being

advised to take prophylactic action to prevent diseases from these sources. One such source was through labour migration to distant places - to the Congo, the Cameroons, Portuguese possessions, to Liberia and Fernando Po - a process that had begun to worry officials even as early as 1901.⁶⁹ By then the labour pool in Sierra Leone was seriously dwindling, many having left for the Ashanti war to take up employment "as carriers or hammock men." Significantly enough, the outbreak of small pox in 1901 at Waterloo, was traced to carriers returned from the Gold Coast.⁷¹

By 1913, there was an extensive trade network, prosecuted by vessels between Sierra Leone and French Guinea, Portuguese Guinea and Liberia and this it was believed held the answer to the controversy regarding the origin of the outbreak of yellow fever in Freetown in 1910. This was all the more important in terms of the number of people who commuted between the various ports. For example, between 1910 and 1913, 142 vessels traded between Freetown and French Guinea, 1,126 between Mahela and French Guinea, 14 between Mano Salijah and Liberia, 9 between Gene and Liberia and 13 between Freetown and Portuguese Guinea.⁷²

The apprehensions governing the likely sources of diseases introduced into Sierra Leone by sea-borne traffic were to lead the Colonial Office to ask Merewether to instruct the port health authorities to undertake an examination of vessels "of every class trading with the ports of the Colony, with a view to determining the presence, and when present, the degree of prevalence of the stegomyia mosquito on board

both at the larval and at the adult state."⁷³ Dr. J.M. Clarke, who had written a lengthy report on the possibilities of fumigation observed that the mosquitoes found on board the S.S. Warri which called at Freetown from Sapele and Warri between 8th April and 24th May 1914, must have come from those latter ports. Of the twelve ships examined during this period there were 14 cases of illness - nine malarial, one intestinal, one yellow fever and three with pyrexia and headache.⁷⁴

There was clearly a need for examining ships calling at Freetown, most of which were rarely disinfected before coaling. This was particularly dangerous because during coaling many labourers were employed on or in the vicinity of the ship. The most effective way of disinfecting a ship then, with a view to exterminating the mosquitoes on board was by means of clayton gas which the Freetown harbour lacked. Steamers therefore had to resume their voyages as "suspected ships," their crew being subject to the risk of infection and the ship, to the disabilities incidental to further quarantine on the homeward voyage. With the exception of the Gambia, Freetown was the only British port on the coast north of Forcados with a safe harbour for large ocean-going steamers. It was therefore the first port at which ships could have been disinfected by clayton gas since the rough seas and the absence of harbour facilities at the intermediate ports, precluded the employment of a clayton launch or even of an improvised clayton machine or lighter.⁷⁵ These considerations constituted the basis for suggestions that every ship calling at Freetown, and which had previously

touched at a West African port, should be visited by a medical officer.⁷⁶

Dr. Kennan, in 1915 was to argue that "the need for special facilities for the fumigation of vessels at a port is inversely proportional (other things being equal) to the facilities the vessels themselves at the port possess for fumigation." No steamer calling at Freetown carried a clayton machine though some ports made it obligatory for ships to do so;⁷⁷ but despite the obvious dangers inherent in the use of sulphur,⁷⁸ the war made it impossible to buy a clayton machine although "the matter is one which should not be lost sight of."⁷⁹ Such problems assisted the spread of diseases in Sierra Leone and rendered the dependency very vulnerable to influenza when the "S.S. Mantua" called at the Freetown harbour in August 1918.⁸⁰

Apart from the threat posed by sea-borne traffic to the port of Freetown, the cattle trade with French Guinea was to cause considerable dangers to the cattle herds in Koinadugu, Railway and Karene districts, all of which shared extensive borders with the latter. Much of the livestock imported into Sierra Leone then was brought from French Guinea, principally to Mahela, which port had the most intimate connection with any of the neighbouring territories.⁸¹

In spite of the prohibition of the export of cows and heifers from French to British territory by 1914, there was still a thriving trade in Koinadugu up to 1915, interrupted only by the outbreak of anthrax and pleuro-pneumonia. In 1915 alone, one chiefdom suffered a loss of about £350, this at a time

when herds were also dying in French Guinea.⁸² In Railway District contacts with French Guinea were sustained through a thriving Sunday Market at Buea, near the Guinea border of Kissi country. As the only market of its kind in the Protectorate, it brought thousands of people together both Africans and foreigners alike.⁸³ The threat to cattle herds by diseases from French Guinea was most conspicuous in Karene.

In September 1914, there was a serious cattle epidemic in Northern Karene, this attributed by the people to the bite of a fly (identified by the District Medical Officer, Dr. Clearkin as Stomoxys Nigra) which came down from French Guinea at regular intervals of five or six years. In 1914 it penetrated the regions down to Batkanu causing 46 deaths among 133 herds bought for the War Department.⁸⁴ The elimination of this disease in 1915 through the burning of the grass, once again revived the cattle trade with Guinea,⁸⁵ but throughout the period of the smallpox epidemic in the district (6th May 1915 to October 1916) this robust cattle trade was threatened by further outbreaks of pleuro-pneumonia among the herds.⁸⁶

In the context of insanitary conditions and constant population movements, the authorities were ill prepared to combat the smallpox epidemic which erupted in 1915.

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Chapter Five: THE SMALLPOX EPIDEMIC 1915-1916

The considerable impetus which international trade received in the period just prior to the outbreak of war was fraught with serious epidemiological consequences. One major result of this experience was the transmission of smallpox from Kindia in French Guinea to Sierra Leone. This was made possible by the great movement of people between the two ecological zones who, became what Prothero has described as "active transmitters" of disease.¹ Apart from the extensive sea-borne traffic between Sierra Leone and French Guinea,² and the thriving cattle trade between the two territories,³ up to 1917, Syrians were still streaming into the Colony and Protectorate from French Guinea. Four months after the commencement of hostilities, Governor Pourvergne of Conakry was seeking permission from Merewether before granting the Syrians passports to travel from French Guinea.⁴ In Freetown there were already apprehensions about what Merewether regarded as the "exceedingly insanitary"⁵ dwellings of the Syrians and by the outbreak of war complaints against the latter, based on sanitary grounds, had become a constant feature of the Sierra Leone Weekly News; such complaints had also attracted the attention of the Sanitary Department.⁶

Syrian participation in commerce ensured constant movement across the frontier with French Guinea. By 1914 the demand for Sierra Leonean kola in Portuguese and French Guinea, Dakar and the Gambia was very high following the profits made on a large groundnut crop in 1913 which fetched very high

prices on the European market. This increased the purchasing power of the inhabitants of those countries. Added to this factor was the massive outlay of railway works which was opening up the Protectorate to greater trade possibilities. The new barons of trade, the Syrians, were to follow the railway further and further into the interior to make huge purchases of kola. In time they not only came to dominate this export trade but gave it a new fillip as well. In 1915 when smallpox erupted in Karene, "the kola market was a short and brisk one" because of the "shortage of money upcountry"⁷ but Syrians like L. Hajje, the Abdo Brothers, J. Charaf and others "were able to buy" and prosecute the kola trade with Conakry, Dakar, the Gambia, Nigeria, St. Louis and Teneriffe.⁸ As the principal buyers of kola, their dominance of the trade was facilitated by the huge remittances in C.F.A. Francs which they obtained from Dakar.⁹

Trade movements across the frontier were not one sided. In early 1917 when Mohammed Eunies was seeking permission to go to Conakry "to continue his business...",¹⁰ Rezk Habib of Conakry also wished to travel to Sierra Leone "chez son frere pour inspecter comptoir".¹¹ Many more arrived in Freetown from French Guinea without reporting their arrival,¹² at a time when the authorities were experiencing problems determining the precise numbers of Syrians in the Protectorate. Apart from pursuing trade, others like P.J. Stambouli wished to go to Guinea for health reasons.¹³

Apart from Syrians other movements across the frontier were also facilitated by the process of recruitment in both French

and British West Africa. As many Africans fled across the borders to avoid recruitment, Merewether was urged "to prevent...the exodus of natives, which the arrival of recruiting commissioners might provoke..."¹⁴

From the above, the epidemiological importance of increased trade and other contacts between French Guinea and Sierra Leone can easily be appreciated. Such contacts facilitated the spread of smallpox long after war had begun. It has been suggested that the distance of movements, the ecological zones crossed, the number of people moving, the nature of their contacts with populations en route and at their destination, and the previous disease exposure of the groups involved, are among the variables which must be considered.¹⁵ Although the evidence of the number of people who travelled between the two regions¹⁶ is rather spotty, what mainly occurred between April 1915 and October 1916, was the meshing of two environments, the people participating directly in long-distance trade acting as the agents of transmission.¹⁷

Given the need to pay greater attention to population movements in epidemiological studies,¹⁸ the aim of this chapter is to examine the hypothesis of disease as a function of increased population mobility and trade contacts. This approach also takes cognizance of patterns of population distribution, the structure of dwellings and the range of economic activities involved in.

THE ENDEMICITY OF SMALLPOX IN SIERRA LEONE

Although the evidence relating to the origins of smallpox in

Africa is as yet inconclusive, medical historians are agreed that the disease probably appeared in Africa in ancient times. Some accounts suggest that it was reintroduced by Arabs who crossed the Sahara during the eighth and tenth centuries A.D. It was well known on the Guinea coast during the seventeenth century; in 1627 there was an outbreak of epidemic in Angola caused by the movements of refugees from Portuguese depredations.¹⁹ Mungo Park, who visited the Niger basin twice between 1796 and 1805 believed that smallpox had been introduced to West Africa by infected Moors from across the Sahara.²⁰

By 1800 ships were constantly bringing in smallpox to the continent.²¹ Since the mid-nineteenth century, parts of Africa had long endured smallpox. C.J. Wilson of the C.M.S. recorded in 1887 that smallpox was "one of the most fatal" diseases to which the Ganda were subjected. It came at intervals in epidemics and carried off thousands of victims. Whatever its origins (Central Africa or India as others suggest) smallpox or "variola major" (its most virulent form) was widespread in Africa by the period of the European conquest, and in Angola in 1864 was associated with an increasing export trade in wax and ivory. By 1891 smallpox was a constant threat to the people of Uganda.²²

West Africa did not avoid this threat and Sierra Leone was particularly vulnerable to smallpox. There is evidence to show that smallpox was endemic in both the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone at least between 1898 and 1915, when the disease assumed epidemic proportions. Despite the

relatively few towns and villages visited and the minute proportion of the population observed by medical officers, up to 1915, there was no year in which there was not at least one case recorded. In 1898, 85 cases were recorded in Freetown alone; none was found in the Protectorate. In 1899, there were 157 cases in Freetown. By 1900, the incidence of smallpox was vastly reduced, but there were still 8 cases in Freetown and 11 at the Kissy Infectious Diseases Hospital of which two died; only occasional outbreaks were reported in the Protectorate.

By 1901, pattern of the disease was manifesting itself in terms of its origins. There were 9 cases in Freetown and 22 at the Kissy Infectious Diseases Hospital (K.I.D.H.) out of which 11 died. The Peninsular area suffered the heaviest casualties. At Waterloo alone, 42 people died. There was also a slight epidemic at Moyamba (Ronietta District) and one case each in Koinadugu and Railway districts. Significantly, the majority of the cases at Freetown and Kissy were introduced by steamers or from the Protectorate. The cases at Waterloo were introduced by carriers returned from the Gold Coast.

Most of the cases in 1902 were traced to the Protectorate and in this year, there were four in Freetown, 12 at the K.I.D.H. out of which two died, two in the Railway District and 10 at Waterloo. No records are available for 1903 and there was probably no epidemic during the year. The sources of smallpox in 1904 were found to be the same as those for 1902. There were 20 cases in Freetown in 1904 in which year also

105 cases were treated in both the Colony and Protectorate, six dying out of the 34 admitted at the K.I.D.H.²³

In 1905, the disease raged with disastrous results and the tendency to conceal it by those affected merely ensured the spread, especially at Kossoh Town in the east end of Freetown. There were 371 cases in Freetown and 629 at the K.I.D.H., out of which 130 died. Although there were sporadic outbreaks in Northern Sherbro and Sherbro districts, the incidence did not assume epidemic proportions. 28 cases had to be treated in a temporary hospital at Koinadugu.

By 1906, smallpox had abated in Freetown and there was no case reported. But Kissy continued to be infected. Out of 101 patients, 14 died at the K.I.D.H. Villages near Bonthe in Sherbro district and several towns in Railway and Ronietta districts also suffered from a mild epidemic (two being treated in hospitals and 35 in dispensaries). Although the outbreak was mild in 1907, there were still 20 cases in Freetown, 20 at the K.I.D.H. with one death, two at Sherbro, one at Hastings, one in Karene and three in Railway district. Only the Railway (four cases) and the Ronietta districts were affected in 1908. The singular case in Freetown in 1909 was introduced by a steamer. There was also one at the K.I.D.H., one suspected case at Waterloo and a few in the Protectorate. In this year also, 6,980 successful vaccinations were carried out. In 1910 when 5,440 persons were successfully vaccinated, there was no outbreak in Freetown, but there was one case at the K.I.D.H., two at York and one in Bo (Railway district). Conditions seemed to have improved by 1911 when only one case

was reported at the K.I.D.H. The singular case in Freetown was said to have been introduced from the military barracks at Tower Hill.

By 1912 the disease was confined to Koinadugu (four cases) and Railway (one case at Panguma) districts. By this time also, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the number of cases reported from year to year offered little or no indication of the actual extent of smallpox. Reports simply recorded "the number of sufferers" brought to the notice of the Government Medical Officer. Only one case was reported in 1913, in Karene; there were two at Mabanta, two at Batkanu in the same district, one at Kabinkolo in Koinadugu, two in Northern Sherbro and four at the K.I.D.H., one at Kissy, five at Sumbuya and an outbreak of serious dimensions (as the following sections will show) in Karene from October 1915.

It should be observed that among the cases admitted at the K.I.D.H. were "infected persons from native craft" trading between Freetown and the Protectorate, from neighbouring villages and not infrequently, from travellers by rail or road on their way to Freetown, and brought there by the police, sanitary constables and friends. Quite often, they were directed there by strangers.²⁴ So endemic was smallpox in Sierra Leone and so accustomed were the people "to its occurrence that until recently, when it was found out that one or two natives from the district (Karene) had carried the disease to Freetown, the chiefs did not realise that the government wish such outbreaks to be reported."²⁵

SMALLPOX IN KARENE AND THE PROTECTORATE

The smallpox epidemic of May 1915 to June 1916, was preceded by several local outbreaks in Karene in 1915. The mortality rates resulting from these outbreaks were low. Chiefs reported cases in their chiefdoms and isolated patients without waiting for instructions and during the year, the Protectorate Health Ordinance came into force. Despite the emphasis on sanitation, no medical officer had been stationed in the district before 6th May.²⁶ By October, the disease had come to constitute the most notable feature of public health. The epidemic, though of a mild form, originated in French territory and spread down the trade route from Kindia to Kambia on the small Scarcies river in October. In many ways, the epidemic was indicative of the problems which long-distance trade was bringing into the country.

The incidence of smallpox in October was hardly mitigated by the outbreak of other diseases. There were six cases of Blackwater fever and three cases of sleeping sickness at Kissy, Makeni and Kabala. Only after the recommendations of Professor Warrington York and Dr Blacklock who had visited the Colony late in 1914 under the auspices of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, were measures taken to limit the breeding of glossinae. The high incidence of other diseases like tuberculosis, and malaria in 1915 and the high mortality rates resulting from them, compounded the sufferings brought on by war conditions on the populace. 109 cases of tuberculosis were treated in 1915, mostly of the pulmonary variety. Very virulent in character, tuberculosis usually ran a fatal course and out of 992 deaths for the year, 31

were returned as due to it. In 1915 also, 22 cases of leprosy were treated. Malaria returns showed that 2,460 cases were treated in 1914 and 2,221 in 1915. These factors, added to inadequate public health measures, the lack of adequate medical personnel and the general stress on the population, provided ready allies for the smallpox epidemic.²⁷

In October 1915 two people from Karene were admitted to the K.I.D.H. suffering from smallpox. Later enquiries revealed that an outbreak of serious proportions existed in the region of the Scarcies rivers in the district but the provincial administration had not reported the outbreak. Just at this time, a smallpox epidemic was raging in French Guinea to the north west of and adjacent to Sierra Leone. The people of the Protectorate attributed the Karene outbreak to this epidemic and the French authorities were notified on 15th November.²⁸

Conditions in Karene were particularly favourable for the spread of disease. With headquarters at Batkanu and two sub-districts at Port Loko and Makeni, it was the most westerly of the Protectorate. Spanning an area of between 5,500 and 6,000 square miles, its greatest breadth was from Balo point to the Rokel river near Mapaki, a distance of 88 miles; its length 84 miles from north to south from the French boundary near Saionia to the Rokel river. Its greatest length spanned 128 miles from Tagrin Point to the Small Scarcies at the French boundary. This geographical proximity to French Guinea facilitated trade contacts and increased population

mobility between the two regions.²⁹ Population mobility created conditions for congestion and this latter development was clearly a function of the relative prosperity which characterised trade in the first six months of the war in the district.

More than during any other period before it, 1914 was significant for having recorded the highest revenue and the chief variable in this connection was the railway. In 1914, the extension of the Branch line to Makeni was opened to traffic, and provided an important attraction for nine European trading stores close to that centre. In early 1914, the D.C.s office was flooded with applications for leases of land so that by 1915, Messrs Paterson Zochonis and Company, Stinus Depuichaffray, E.Sourjous, M. Jourdan, The French Company, The Societe Commerciale de L'Ouest Africain, M. Petit and Mrs. Teckham, a Sierra Leonean, were all occupying lands on lease from the traditional authority at Makeni. As the railway progressed, other traders - Krios and Syrians - flocked to the district to continue the kola trade. Population increases in the district were clearly reflected in the increased revenue derived from the house tax, store and hawkers' licences and the added importance of Bombali country in the south-eastern corner of Karene.³⁰

Other factors favourable for epidemic condition were soon to make themselves felt in the district. By September 1914, trade had begun to lose its usual vitality in Port Loko caused partly by the war and the excesses of the men of the West Africa Regiment who were notorious for plundering

cassava farms³¹ all over the country. Dubbed "red belly" (after their red cummerbund worn round the waist) by the public, they were held responsible for the "barefaced depredations" of farms at Wilberforce and Murray town and for the general scarcity of "foofoo" in the village.³²

These activities combined to "disturb people from up country on their way to Port Loko... the rumour of ill-treatment at the hands of the military"³³ was to considerably reduce trade in the district. Trade in the sub-district was further affected by escalating prices in Freetown, especially the prices of tobacco and salt. But the greatest threat came from the spate of rumour-mongering which followed in the wake of the order to mobilise and "which disturbed the people." The D.C. therefore had to reassure all Paramount Chiefs and urged them to continue their normal trading routine.³⁴ Almost the same drawbacks were evident in Sherbro,³⁵ Headquarter,³⁶ Railway, Koinadugu, Northern Sherbro³⁷ and Ronietta districts³⁸ which also suffered from the epidemic in the period under review.

In Karene in general, the fortunes of its principal exports - palm kernels and palm oil, kola, cattle and rice were rendered particularly hazardous by the outbreak of war. Palm kernel lost its chief market, Hamburg and although there was some improvement in November and December, by January 1915, prices remained low. Furthermore, the production of surplus rice did not lead producers to a more judicious use of the commodity, and by the beginning of 1915, it was obvious that "very few" had "sufficient to last them until the next

harvest." This was particularly serious for, while the piassava trade had yet to demonstrate its economic viability, cassava, millet, guinea corn, maize, "fundi", groundnuts, sweet potatoes, yams and pumpkin were not grown in sufficient quantities for export, though a considerable market-garden trade was carried on with Freetown. Up to 1915 the district had yet to turn to good account "the miles and miles of country" in the coastal regions, so eminently suited for the cultivation of coco-nut. Matters were not improved by the outbreak of a cattle epidemic in September 1914.³⁹

Conditions had not materially changed by the time of the outbreak of smallpox in 1915. 1915 itself was characterised by a severe depression in trade evidenced in dwindling revenue returns in the district. Even though the cattle-trade picked up, there was a slight drop in the numbers brought over from French Guinea.⁴⁰ To add to this catalogue of depressed conditions, upland rice suffered considerably from the heavy rains and many farms had to be abandoned; even swamp rice from the Little Scarcies was destroyed by the high tides.⁴¹ On the whole, population mobility, population increase, increased trade contacts with Guinea albeit on a less profitable scale - a generally depressed socio-economic scenario - were to lead to psychological and physical stress and made the populace easy targets for smallpox.

Detailed to the Scarcies rivers on 9th October 1915, Dr Clark found that the disease had been present in Susu-Limba country on the mid Great Scarcies river adjacent to the French border since April. From here, it spread south and south west;

three cases were reported in May in Port Loko. Initial responses to the disease ranged from isolation of the sick, to inoculation but African prophylactic measures were inadequate. In one town, out of 20 cases, 10 had been inoculated each by a single mark on the left arm. Because there was no control over contacts, vaccination was resorted to. Lanolinated lymph was also used added to fumigation and disinfection. The authorities used sulphur and izal which prevented itching and healed the pustules rapidly. This early phase was significant for appreciating the spread of disease. The crowning of an Alimami (chief) around November brought together a large number of people in the district. Though many were vaccinated, they subsequently helped to spread the disease. By the end of November, the shortage of medical officers aggravated the situation and more cases were reported from the central and western parts of Karene.⁴²

In December, the Guinean origins of the disease were further confirmed through the discovery of a distinct history of infection by a trader from French Guinea. The rather poor methods of isolation rendered conditions particularly difficult. Fumigation was done in a shelter half a mile from the town, but infected clothing was still left in the house of patients; movement between towns still continued and Dr Clearkin found that attendants of victims were usually but not always rendered immune by a previous attack. The fumigation of mud huts with grass roofs clearly failed to yield positive results. The air spaces between the roofs and the walls were closed up with mats and mud, but the sulphur fumes managed to escape through the grass. By the end of

December, smallpox had spread to some six miles around Makump,⁴³ round the Scarries rivers and to parts of Sanda chiefdom.

African suspicion did little to mitigate the problem. Victims were always loath to abide by what they construed as government's draconian measures to combat the disease - such as curtailing freedom of movement. In their bid to preserve trade and the traffic from the Scarries and Port Loko, even "loyal" chiefs concealed the disease. "In one town contacts and a case of smallpox ran away after instructions had been given for isolation." Others refused vaccination and by so doing, ensured the spread in the district and along the border with French Guinea.⁴⁴

Smallpox was also aided in its course by the rice harvest when "many people from towns are gathered together." During December, the disease spread to Mambolo and Samu chiefdoms and by January 1916, infection from other parts had increased significantly. By March, all 50 chiefdoms in the district had been infected and towns and villages in neighbouring Ronietta were also beginning to suffer from the disease. The same was true for Railway, Koinadugu, Sherbro, Northern Sherbro and Headquarter districts. In the main, smallpox followed the great trading centres such as Rotifunk on the railway in Ronietta District, Blama in Railway District, Songo in Headquarter District, the Songo-Rokel Road in Ronietta, Kabala in Koinadugu District, and the neighbourhood of Sumbuya on the Bum river. In many places, it exhibited a differential impact.

In December 1915 and January 1916, there were several infected towns in the Railway and Northern Sherbro districts. Though smallpox was of "small proportions," in the town of Kallah, nearly half the people were said to be infected; in February 1916, there was only one case at Kabala; in June, there were four in the village of Kwelu some eight miles north of Moyamba in Ronietta.⁴⁵

By the end of February 1916, the epidemic had subsided at Port Loko. At Dixing, the chiefs to the south and west were strictly enforcing the policy of isolation "no one being allowed to pass except on government duty." But in the neighbourhood of Makeni, a severe and widespread epidemic had to be combatted. The same was true of the region of the newly opened railway between Makump and Kamabai. By April, the acute shortage of staff forced the government to establish an immune belt "as broad as possible south of the Rokel river extending from the sea eastwards well beyond any known infected area and as far as possible, to vaccinate universally within this belt, dealing with towns and villages in the infected area to the north by paying flying visits as necessity arose." By 8th June, the disease had subsided in many places except for a few isolated towns in distant parts of the country which were being dealt with by dispensers Scott and Heroe.⁴⁶

An examination of the course of the disease in various parts of the district helps explain its spread. The disease was introduced to Port Loko from French Guinea in May 1915 by traders passing through the trade route in Dixing chiefdom.

From here, it spread to Dibia (in November) "one of the most thickly populated parts in the country," thence to Magbema and further south through the trade route and to Kambia and Port Loko, to both sides of the Great Scarcies and to a town in Bullom on the south bank of the Little Scarcies, in December. To the west of Karene also, the disease had come directly from French Guinea and here Tonko Limba Chiefdom was a more important nucleus from which infection was carried widely elsewhere including Sanda chiefdom. In this part of the district, only one town was infected from Maligia in French Guinea.

In Eastern Karene in May 1915, a man returning from Rotifunk on the railway fell ill with smallpox at Pendembu and from this case began an epidemic of unparalleled severity in this part of the district.⁴⁷ In Koinadugu, smallpox ran its fatal course until October 1916⁴⁸ in Simiria chiefdom. By 20th October, there were two deaths and 11 severe cases in Simiria, this at a time when reports were to hand of similar outbreaks in the two Koinadugu chiefdoms of the Makeni sub-district.⁴⁹ In central Karene, the epidemic lasted from January to March 1916 around Batkanu. First intimations about the outbreak in Northern Karene came to hand in February 1916 and fresh outbreaks in June led to a dispenser being sent there. Although the source was traced to French Guinea, the towns in the far north were not visited by medical officers.

The close proximity of Ronietta to Karene made the spread of smallpox to the former a inevitable. In March, 1916 cases

were reported at Magbile an important trade centre on the north bank of the Rokel river and in villages further down the river.⁵⁰ It spread into Kwaia chiefdom through which passed the trade route from Magbile to Songo town on the railway,⁵¹ and appeared in Masimera. Further east, Mabang and Gbonkolenken were infected from Karene and there were rumours of infection from Kunike and Sanda.

THE EPIDEMIC IN FREETOWN

Given the north-westerly position of Karene, there was a clear danger that the disease might spread to Freetown. Prophylactic measures therefore had to be taken. Apart from the immune belt created to the south of Karene, careful watch was kept on vessels and passengers arriving in Freetown and on 16th January 1916, all District Commissioners were officially circularised regarding the outbreak. But these initial measures proved unhelpful to the Sanitary authorities. Only one D.C. replied and he said that he was unable to trace cases of smallpox; no other replies were received and the failure to control the movement of people brought the disease to Freetown. Traders were the main transmitters from Karene and smallpox struck at the heart of congested residences occupied by the "labouring class."

The histories of six imported cases to Freetown, admitted at the K.I.D.H., between 22nd December 1915 and 23rd March 1916, shows a distinct connection between the outbreak in Karene and that in Freetown. Travelling by canoe, the victims had all passed through infected districts. Three came down via Port Loko and the other three via Kambia, the great trading

centre on the Scarcies. Three went directly to the K.I.D.H. and the others settled in the east of Freetown (one at Hagan Street, one at Mountain Cut, and one at Kossoh Town). During the same period, six non-imported cases were reported from Rawdon Street, Lucas Street, Malta Street, Patton Street, Goderich Street and Krootown Road. That at 18 Lucas Street was traced to the imported case at Kossoh Town. Though other parts of Freetown were affected, the disease was particularly prevalent in the centres of congestion, for which Kossoh Town (between Savage Square and Patton Street) was notorious. The town was a rendez vous for migrants from Karene⁵² and the evidence is illustrative of this tendency even up to 1916.⁵³

Between 16th and 31st March 1916, seven non-imported cases were admitted; five from Waterloo Street in the West end of Freetown had once lived in Karene. The others came from 18 Lucas Street and Soldier Street respectively. Between 23rd and 31st March, only one imported case was admitted, again from Karene. Of the 19 non-imported cases admitted in April, seven came from Kossoh Town. (5 from a house at the corner of Fourah Bay Road and Patton Street). Outside Kossoh Town, four were from Pademba Road, two from Kroo Town, two from Fula Town, one from Ingham Street, one from Walpole Street, one from Mary Street and another from Charlotte Street. The 4 from Pademba Road, lived in the same house and had all come from Karene. In April, there were two imported cases - one from Bullom and one from Bo. By May, the majority of imported cases came from the east end of Freetown. Of the eight cases reported, two were from Kossoh Town, two from Ross Road, one from Tarlton Lane, all in the east end. One

came from the Kingtom peninsular, one from Dundas Street and one from Chapel Street, all in the west end.

The case at Chapel Street was a very good example of the dangers resulting from concealment. The house in which was found two cases of chicken pox in addition to smallpox was used as a traditional hospital in charge of a Temne "medicine man". Patients attended here for treatment and in this way spread the disease. By June, the epidemic had subsided and only one case was reported.⁵⁴

In Freetown, the authorities found it difficult to trace the movement of a particular case. The statements of patients were extremely unreliable and the information given was of a very general nature so that deductions were of necessity the same. It is worthwhile to observe that from an epidemiological standpoint, out of a total of 40 non-imported cases reported between 22nd December 1915 and 10th June 1916, 22 had lived at one time in Karene District. The social intercourse taking place among people from the same district may partly explain why the disease was more widespread among people from Karene than among those from other parts of the Protectorate or among the Krio population, though the infection became more general later.

Of the 51 cases admitted at the K.I.D.H., the average age was 29.58 years. No person under 12 was found to be infected, but this was only a rough average of the age incidence, the available data being extremely unreliable. Only a few women were attacked by the disease. This was mainly because many

houses in certain parts of the town were almost completely occupied by single labourers among whom the infection spread. In a practically un-vaccinated community like Freetown, the death rate of seven could not be taken as a high case of mortality. In all 43 out of the 51 cases were vaccinated for the first time on admission; one of these had been unsuccessfully vaccinated twice and another 29 years before the outbreak in 1915.⁵⁵

MANAGEMENT OF THE OUTBREAK IN FREETOWN

The large concentration of infected persons in Kossah Town forced the authorities to devote great attention there. Between January, February and part of March, the Public Vaccinator worked continuously in the district and a Sanitary Constable patrolled Susan's Bay where arrivals from the Scarcies rivers and Port Loko disembarked. However, information about arrivals and the movement of imported cases were generally very scanty and most times "action had to be taken on what was sometimes little more than a suspicion."

Reports of two non-imported cases on March 23rd 1916 led the government to declare Freetown an infected port under the Quarantine Ordinance of 1916 and extensive prophylactic measures were taken to deal with the disease. In addition, various vaccination centres were established at the Colonial Hospital, the Cline Town dispensary, the Sanitary Department, at the various surgeries of the Sierra Leonean medical practitioners and at 99 Campbell Street. African practitioners were also appointed public vaccinators under the Vaccination Ordinance and a number of young men were

especially trained as temporary assistant vaccinators.

Fear of the impending attack made vaccination initially very popular but the rush soon depleted the supply of lymph vaccine despite a large consignment from French Guinea. Arm to arm vaccination was therefore resorted to; but even though the practice was to undertake vaccination wherever the disease was reported and though all schools were visited, the difficulty of finding all the inmates in one house made it uncertain that all contacts had been dealt with.

According to the Quarantine (Anti-smallpox) Regulation, no one was allowed on board a ship without producing evidence of recent vaccination. In this way Kroo men employed at Freetown to work cargo at various ports on the coast and who otherwise "might have been very difficult to deal with"⁵⁶ were vaccinated. The results of vaccination were usually satisfactory but there was opposition to it in some places. This resulted in prosecutions and convictions under the Compulsory Vaccination Ordinance.⁵⁷ By 30th June, the declaration of infection had not been rescinded and there were still difficulties in finding the residences of victims who reported at the hospitals. Changes in names, a common practice, created problems for the authorities.

The usual process of fumigation was also carried out with sulphur fumes.⁵⁸ All articles of clothing, bedding and other furniture were soaked in lysol solution, useless bedding and matting being burnt. Even the clothing of contacts likely to be infected were treated and when it was impossible to make

houses airtight, the walls and floors were scrubbed with disinfectant. In addition, infected houses were isolated and kept under observation for 14 days, the victims being transported later by fly proof stretchers to the K.I.D.H. at night.

However, as the authorities devised precautionary measures, so did infected persons, at times in collusion with the non-infected, resort to evasive tactics. Victims were sometimes driven to the outskirts of the town. The five from Fourah Bay Road were driven out of the house as soon as the rash appeared; they were discovered hiding in the bush near Kissy Road Cemetery and by the time their residence was found out, the other inmates had disappeared. Another was found at Hill Station near a spring believed to have healing powers. Elsewhere, cases were removed to neighbouring villages.⁵⁹

On 22nd April 1916 powers were obtained for house-to-house visitation, Drs. Ward, Clarke, Maxwell and the Medical Officer of Health being appointed house-to-house visitors. The results of their efforts were limited as only two cases were found. The exercise itself conflicted with their normal duties; many houses were found closed and unless there was a suspicion of concealment, they were not invested with powers for forcible entry. In all, 1426 houses were either partially or wholly inspected but a general inspection was difficult to accomplish. Met generally with "locked doors," the team resorted to a random selection and ended up inspecting only a few houses in each street. Legal action was taken in three cases against persons for wilful

concealment and all were convicted.⁶⁰

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the policy of containment was the enforcement of the Quarantine Ordinance of 23rd March 1916. As the most important port on the British West African coast, Freetown had to be protected first, to prevent the disease from being exported, and then to avoid creating severe problems for the shipping trade. Practically every British West African steamer called at Freetown either outward or homeward-bound for water or coal⁶¹ and to enlist Kru (usually regarded as extremely probable carriers of infection)⁶²

The enforcement of the Ordinance was to tax the energies of the Sanitary department to the full. All intending passengers, Europeans, Africans and Kru were examined and, during quarantine, 3,000 certificates of "freedom from infectious disease" were granted. The fumigation of baggage was conducted twice daily beginning at 8.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. The Elder Dempster Line provided lighters alongside the jetty near the fumigation chamber to take baggage to the steamers. But the very limited capacity of fumigation building posed problems. It had two chambers - one for fumigation and one for storage - each of about 3,000 cubic feet. The resulting congestion when two or three steamers were expected, was considerable.⁶³ Furthermore, the isolation chamber, a hut at King Jimmy, opposite the Colonial Hospital, was regarded by the P.M.O. as "a disgrace to the Colony...it is small...in it men and women are placed together...all infectious cases are mixed up together in it -

chickenpox and smallpox."⁶⁴

Further preventive measures included the examination or vaccination of labourers everyday (where necessary) before being allowed to handle cargo on the wharf. Labourers of the Sierra Leone Coaling Company were exempted because they did not actually go on board, and only worked on stages by the side of the ships. As before, most of these measures were ad hoc ones designed to meet the emergency so that sanitary and health officers had to contend with the arduous and daily routine of vaccination and examination - of purveyors of fruit and provisions to ships and boat-men who plied for hire between ship and shore. Quarantine orders extended to the local coast traffic between Freetown and other local ports (either foreign or in the Colony). Apart from lighters, no craft of 10 tons or over was allowed to anchor in Susan's Bay, between Falcon Bridge and Mabela Point. No such vessel was allowed to lie alongside the jetty at night and no member of the crew was allowed to come ashore at any time without the permission of the Health Officer.⁶⁵

THE OUTBREAK OF CHICKENPOX OR "VARICELLA"

The smallpox epidemic was assisted in its course by a simultaneous outbreak of chickenpox. Though few cases were reported every year, "such an increase as has been experienced this year, has not...been known here for some time."⁶⁶ Chickenpox was more a direct outcome of the war for just at the same time, the disease was "fairly common in the Cameroons" and was brought to Sierra Leone by a "large number of carriers (mostly Mendes) from Duala."⁶⁷ The histories of

infected persons showed that they had just arrived from the Cameroons before admission. Eight cases were reported from the farm of King George, a Mende ex-chief who had been commissioned by the military authorities to recruit carriers for the Cameroon Expeditionary Force and to whom many went on their return.⁶⁸ Although the epidemic attacked all groups in Freetown, the Mendes, who constituted the bulk of the Carrier Corps were the worst hit. A few cases were also imported from the hinterland "where the natives do not look upon the disease as serious."

The outbreak of chickenpox was sudden. Between January and February 1916 only one (one imported) case was admitted at the K.I.D.H. By March, 10 cases one of which was imported had been taken in. The imported case had lived at Malta Lane in the east end of Freetown and had arrived from the Railway district three days before admission. During April, 35 cases were admitted; five of these were imported ones and of the latter, one had arrived from the Cameroons shortly before admission; two came from Bullom and were discovered at Susan's Bay. One came from the Railway district and another from Bonthe.

The non-imported cases were admitted from all parts of Freetown and included three from King George's farm.

During May, 31 cases were reported, five of which were imported. Of the latter, four came from the Cameroons and one from Wilberforce barracks. Further, three non-imported cases were reported from King George's farm and two from Ginger Hall, the residence of the Mende tribal authority in

Freetown. During June, nine cases, all non-imported were brought to light, the last being reported on the 26th. As in the case of smallpox, the epidemic subsided with the onset of the rainy season in June⁶⁹ when rainfall levels peaked to 149.21 inches - the greatest registered since 1909.⁷⁰ It would appear that humid conditions helped to check the spread of the disease.

Of the 84 cases admitted to the K.I.D.H. the average age was 26.21 years and out of a total of 86 cases, only 17 were females, further underscoring the thesis of the tendency of diseases to spread among labourers. Occurring as it did simultaneously with the smallpox outbreak, chickenpox was treated as part of the latter, the normal processes of isolation, fumigation, vaccination and observation being adhered to. This precluded any chance of infection resulting from an error in diagnosis.⁷¹

During the first half of 1916, 37,879 vaccinations were administered; 24,070 in Freetown and Hill Station; 1,840 in the Freetown Police District outside the former, 868 in the Colony proper and 11,101 in the Protectorate including the Protective Belt. 20,090 of these were reported as successful but the war was a serious hindrance in the management of the crisis.

At the beginning of the epidemic, supplies of lymph were received regularly from England through the Crown Agents. Later a maximum of 250 tubes sufficient for about 2,500 vaccinations were received about once a fortnight. However

interruptions in the mail service because of the war and the epidemic itself made delivery at times very difficult. The administration in French Guinea had to come to the rescue, supplying lymph made at Kindia near Conakry. 7,000 doses were received early in April and 8,000 later in the month. Subsequently the French administration was requested to supply 1,000 doses weekly and during July, August and September, (the rainy season) 500 doses were considered sufficient. Earlier supplies came in the form of gifts but the latter ones were paid for at the rate of 6 francs, 56 centimes per 1,000 doses. Bacteriological examination of the French lymph carried out to avoid accidental contamination showed that it was an organism of non-pathogenic properties.⁷²

There were problems of an even greater magnitude. The provisions of the Quarantine Ordinance could not be carried out sufficiently thoroughly to meet the objects for which they were intended. This was so because it was impossible to prevent movement in and out of the region and measures of compulsion forced many victims to conceal the disease. Furthermore, the medical staff was grossly insufficient for the purpose. Worse still there was no organisation for checking the pass system. Few of those available were able to read and the authorities feared that compulsion would lead to a great exodus of people thereby spreading the disease.

Administrative problems were also to impinge on efforts to enforce the Quarantine Ordinance. The first was the problem of dual control examined in Chapter 4. The other was the

problem of divided control in the enforcement of the regulations. Apart from the military and naval authorities, the Harbour Master, the Comptroller of Customs and the Commissioner of Police were all more or less involved in the process. Each was head of an independent department and was in no way subordinate to the Sanitary authority. Their duties with regard to quarantine were additional to their normal duties. At one time during the epidemic, the Comptroller of Customs was also the Harbour Master; at another time, the Harbour Master was an Assistant Commissioner of Police.

Conscious of these administrative drawbacks, the Junior Sanitary officer, Beringer, urged compulsory vaccination in the whole of the Colony and Protectorate, the appointment of an adequate staff of vaccinators to accomplish this aim, the presentation of periodic reports of outbreaks of smallpox by District Commissioners, the careful drawing up of revised quarantine regulations for dealing with future epidemics together with details of organisation and action and the purchase of portable spray disinfectors. Beringer also recommended the setting up of a central organisation for dealing with quarantine free from dual control.⁷³

PROBLEMS IN COMBATING SMALLPOX IN THE PROTECTORATE

The problems encountered in eradicating smallpox in the Protectorate were not very different from those experienced in Freetown. Despite the vigorous measures taken to vaccinate the population and in spite of the scheme for the systematic isolation and disinfection of victims, the disease

not only infected almost all the towns in the region of Karene, but also spread to other areas. Out of 6,880 vaccinations administered in the district, 4,976 were successful and 1,276 unsuccessful. The rest were not observed. The situation was not helped by officialdom's ad hoc approach to vaccination. Thus between 1909 and 1915 the number of successful vaccinations for the whole of Sierra Leone, averaged 6,724, in a total population of 1,402,149.⁷⁴ This was particularly serious considering the fact that during 1915 and 1916 there were temporary increases in the population of Freetown due to the return of large numbers of carriers from the Cameroons many of whom were allowed to reside in the capital before going back to the Protectorate.⁷⁵ The number of official vaccinations performed other than under official direction was negligible and immunity was, for the most part, the result of earlier epidemics.

Apart from vaccination, inoculation was performed in certain districts but definite information was difficult to obtain and statements were for the most part contradictory. A District Commissioner argued that "...wherever a virulent outbreak of smallpox occurs, and natives are dying from it, they invariably commence to inoculate each other from arm to arm with smallpox...in outbreaks of non-malignant forms of smallpox inoculation is not practised." Furthermore, vaccination interfered with farming cycles and bred hostile reactions. Although many chiefs isolated patients, their commitment was generally lukewarm and "in no single case was isolation properly carried out..."

It was clear that in the estimation of the chiefs, commercial interests were to take precedence over any official policy which tended to interfere with the usual routine of their people. They resented government's decision to quarantine the whole of Dixing. If the government's intention in doing so was to close the road to French Guinea and prevent reinfection, the action also curtailed trade much to the chagrin of the chiefs.⁷⁶ Not even the grant of sanitation prizes in the form of ornamental swords and illuminated vellum certificates,⁷⁷ succeeded in securing the much needed cooperation the government had hoped for.

The African response to official policy was varied. This ranged from the use of traditional medicine, ⁷⁸ dependence on the African herbalist and his wide ranging pharmacopoeia, intercessions to gods through priests, the resort to Islam⁷⁹ and a much more overt hostility to Western medicine and vaccination.⁸⁰ The last two responses are more pertinent for appreciating the problems faced by officialdom. The increasing recourse to Islam as an attempt to explain the origin of disease has already been examined.⁸¹

Hostility to Western medicine and vaccination in the Protectorate normally took the form of desertions and concealment. At Kwaia where smallpox persisted till August 1916, victims were removed "from one town to another..." Karamoko Beneh argued that the people were afraid due to rumours that some of those vaccinated at Songo had died of the vaccine ulcers. They also feared that vaccination would introduce smallpox into any town not previously infected,

apart from the fact that it interfered with their farm work.

The success of vaccination mainly depended on the consent of the Paramount Chief, who resided at Gbagbai. Here, the medical dispenser was delayed for six days after June 18 "doing nothing" whilst the people all fled to their farms.⁸² The chief's men argued that dispenser Scott was attempting "to combine land piracy with vaccination" and that whilst they were favourably disposed to the latter they deeply resented compulsory methods.⁸³ This case was coloured by great controversy. Whilst the P.M.O. found D.C. Stanley's report "alarmist," the Colonial Secretary argued that Scott had "displayed a considerable want of tact and consideration towards those to whom it was to his interest to conciliate and persuade."⁸⁴

In Kholifa and Yonni chiefdoms, knowledge of the persistence of smallpox in October came at a time when the chief was planning a meeting at Matamp Wallien.⁸⁵ But the reaction of the people of Yonibana was not materially different from those at Kwaia. Those at Rotching "especially said they would not be vaccinated" and the only positive results were achieved at Mayosso, under Paramount Chief Bai Yosso whose town was suffering from the epidemic and "I think strong action is very necessary to bring the people to their senses as they are at present in an unruly and defiant state."⁸⁶ The persistent subjection of medical officers to "derision and obloquy" was to lead the P.M.O. to suggest that the entire Colony and Protectorate be brought under compulsory vaccination.⁸⁷ But there was a further problem to be

contended with.

By the time of the outbreak, the West African Medical staff was badly depleted.⁸⁸ No medical officer had been stationed in Karene since 6th May 1915⁸⁹ and the resultant dearth of medical personnel hindered attempts to prepare even a single hut for fumigation. This usually involved between 12 and 20 men and lasted for about three hours but it was "never done properly unless under the supervision of a dispenser or a medical officer." Even when the latter were involved, "scarcely enough pressure of sulphur fumes is obtained owing to gradual leakage through the grass thatch...⁹⁰

THE IMPACT

The outbreak of smallpox in 1915-16 was to have a differential impact on nearly every aspect of life in Sierra Leone. From the standpoint of health and sanitary reforms which followed in its wake, the disease was really a blessing in disguise. The outbreak forced the government to pay serious attention to the question of fumigating ships as well as the need for enforcing proper quarantine measures. It was the occasion for passing wide-ranging regulations. Thereafter, masters of ships were required to anchor at not less than 440 yards from the shore. All passengers and members of the crew signing on at Freetown were to be examined by a medical officer and were required to produce a medical certificate showing that they were free from any sign of smallpox, a medical certificate of recent vaccination or exemption from vaccination and a certificate showing that their baggages had been fumigated prior to embarkation.

Furthermore, a medical officer was to examine all labourers engaged to coal or handle cargo. Labourers without the necessary certificates stipulated above, were not to be given permission to leave the shore. All persons intending to do business on board were to be examined by a medical officer and were required to provide the necessary certificates against smallpox. The Governor took discretionary powers for providing "sanitary stations or buildings for labourers or other persons... required in or about ships and for carrying goods from infected areas." He was also empowered to order the isolation of such persons in such stations or buildings. These regulations were to apply to Freetown and were to commence on 22nd May 1916.⁹¹

By the second quarter of 1916, several improvements had been effected. A new, efficient and rapid means for disinfecting huts and houses was introduced. The Colony and Protectorate staff of vaccinators was greatly increased, specially selected Africans being trained and appointed Assistant Public Vaccinators among their own people in the Protectorate. All District Commissioners were also appointed Assistant Public Vaccinators and were to deputise for the Medical Officer whenever the latter was absent. The aim was to suppress the disease before "it should assume epidemic proportions." It should however be noted that the K.I.D.H., established at Kissy, a very long distance from Freetown, was "in such an unsatisfactory state, the buildings being old, dilapidated and quite unsuited for infectious cases that it is hardly worthy of the name it bears."⁹² The subsequent instructions by the Army Council to Commandants of prisoners

of war that all effects and articles of clothing of those who died from infectious diseases during internment were to be disinfected before being despatched to the Information Bureau, were apparently a function of these latter drawbacks at the Kissy hospital.⁹³

One notable outcome of the outbreak was the intensification of research into diseases in Sierra Leone, such as malaria,⁹⁴ dysentery and insect-borne diseases.⁹⁵ In Freetown for instance the increase in Benign Tertian Malarial Fever was to mark the beginnings of "serious attempts at Peninsula village sanitation" this after many parasites had been subjected to microscopical examination in the clinical laboratory in Freetown.⁹⁶

Apart from these reforms, smallpox exercised a negative impact in other spheres of life. That the disease followed the trade routes underscores the fact that there was a great movement of people in war time. The threat to whole villages was therefore great. To the east of Karene there were 107 cases resulting in five deaths and only 10 non-immune persons were left in one village. In a town west of Karene in Susu-Limba chiefdom, there were over 200 cases; between August 1915 and April 1916, 25 towns and villages in the Kunso-Myata-Musumba area were infected. In Susu-Limba country, smallpox curtailed farming activity "so that a local famine prevailed."

From a demographic standpoint, only 1,351 cases were known to Dr. Wood and his team. This clearly did not reflect the true

picture and probably "...not more than a third either of cases or of deaths were discovered by the authorities."⁹⁷

The fact that the population of Freetown had declined from 34,090 in 1911 to 31,416⁹⁸ would indicate that the mortality rate resulting from smallpox was definitely higher than that known to the authorities.

Apart from threatening maritime trade at the port at Freetown, the enforcement of the Quarantine Ordinance meant considerable expansion of the role of sanitary officials. The military was also affected for at a time when the authorities were experiencing difficulties in securing carriers to replace the casualties in the Cameroons recruitment could not be carried out in Karene due to the epidemic. The same reason⁹⁹ precluded a company of the W.A.F.F. being sent to the district in April 1916 after demobilisation.¹⁰⁰ Added to these difficulties, the expenditure entailed in containing the disease worsened the financial position and led to cuts in budgetary allocations for public works. In November 1916, Wilkinson declared that "The continuance of the smallpox epidemic with its attendant expenditure...and the uncertainty as to the Colony's financial position in 1917 have led me to curtail... expenditure on railway expansion."¹⁰¹

In Sierra Leone, the epidemic gave added impetus to a process of Islamic revival that had begun even before the outbreak of war. At Falaba, just north of Karene, "Mohammedanism was making progress in all the Yalunka chiefdoms...whenever one goes about these parts...there are almost always some followers of the prophet..."¹⁰² In 1916¹⁰³ a District

Commissioner observed that "Nowhere in this Protectorate has missionary enterprise come into such close competition with the spread of Mohammedanism. A very large proportion of the Gallinas tribes are already Mohammedans..." In a context in which western medicine failed to combat smallpox and against the background of the failures of the "powers of medicine men and the efficacy of charms to avert evil,"¹⁰⁴ the Muslim prophet Alhaji Omaru entered the stage with a distinct millenarian message and hope for salvation. Aware of the socio-economic privations caused by war, he called for the sacrifice of "10 white kolas and 10 pieces of bread; for the people "to kill a fowl" and "cook rice and divide the food into three parts for three basins and give it to others." Muslims were also to write a prayer which was to be made into a potion and drunk.¹⁰⁵

Omaru apparently saw the epidemic as a punishment for the material pursuits of a society that was also obsessed with "women and pleasure." Islamic evangelism in this period of stress was prosecuted throughout the Protectorate, first by the Waliuhu and then by the "open sedition" of Seku Darami.¹⁰⁶ Islamic revival posed a threat to Protestants and other Christian confessions in Sierra Leone. Bishop Johnson was to attribute the failure of the Sierra Leone Church Missions among "the natives upcountry" to the "diabolical charms of the Mohammedan Alfa or the grovelling fetish of the medicine monger..."¹⁰⁷ At Moyamba, Father Flottat complained that the advent of the Waliuhu was marked by deep "unrest. He endeavours by all means in his power to make converts to his religion...and I do my best for my own belief..."¹⁰⁸

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51. ibid; see also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Ronietta 43/16. Medical Dispenser, Port Loko - P.M.O. 19/7/16.
52. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645 - "Report of Dr. W. Allan, Medical Officer of Health."
53. On congestion in Freetown see P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/23765 - Report on the Sierra Leone Police Force 1916; P.R.O. C.O. 267/548/8974 Annual Report Headquarter District 1912; P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/42910 Sanitary Report on Freetown 1916; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P. Conf 70/1917. G.H. 39/17 of 10/7/17; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. L.M. 385/16 Mr J.S. Coker, General Manager, Transport and General Agency to Colonial Secretary April 1916; C.S.O. L.M. 490/16. Beringer to P.M.O., 8/6/16.

54. "Report of Dr. W. Allan" op. cit.
55. *ibid.* Much of what follows is based on the "Allan Report."
56. *ibid.*
57. See Vaccination Ordinance of 1907, passed on 12th April 1916.
58. 31 lbs. of rolled sulphur was used for every 1,000 cubic ft.
59. See the Public Health Ordinance Section 58 of 1905.
60. "Allan Report" op.cit.
61. So important was the port of Freetown that in 1924, Governor Slater argued that "...if the Suez Canal should become closed to British shipping, Sierra Leone would become...the hub of all overseas traffic..." See S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Governor's Secret Despatches 1924; SECRET 13/5/24, 54-4-24; Slater to Secretary of State 16/1/24.
62. See Gazette 5/8/16.
63. "Allan Report" op.cit.
64. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. L.M. 410/16 - P.M.O. to Senior Sanitary Officer 5/5/16; Z.D. Leomy to Wilkinson 29/4/16; "Marilla Van" in S.L.W.N. 15/4/16.
65. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645 - Despatch 435, 21/10/16
66. *ibid* "Allan Report"
67. *ibid.*
68. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department (WD) 47/15 - Major R. Litchford 1/W.I.R. a/D.A.A. and Q.M.G. West Africa to Colonial Secretary 18/5/15; Acting Colonial Secretary to D.A.A. and Q.M.G., 20/5/15; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. SECRET 3/17 - Major C.H.B. Weston a/D.A.A. and Q.M.G. to Colonial Secretary 20/1/17; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. W.D./177/17 - Captain Army S.C. to Colonial Secretary 4/12/17.
69. The "Allan Report" op.cit.
70. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/50804 - Blue Book Report 1916.
71. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645 - Appendix - "Outbreak of Varicella in Freetown in 1916."
72. *ibid.*
73. *ibid* - A. Beringer to Senior Sanitary Officer, 14/8/16 in M.P. 220/15.
74. The Population of Freetown in 1915 was then 34,090; 41,482 for the rest of the Colony and 1,326,577 for the

Protectorate. See P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645.

75. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/42910 - Sanitary Report on Freetown 1916; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. L.M. 385/16; L.M. 380/16; L.M. 490/16.

76. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645 - "Report of Dr. Wood."

77. P.R.O. C.O. 267/570/23387 - Annual Report Karene District 1915.

78. M. Koumare - "Traditional Medicine and psychiatry in Africa" in R.H. Bannerman et al (eds) - Traditional Medicine and Health Care Coverage, Geneva (W.H.O. 1983) pp. 25-36 cited by C.M. Good - "Community Health in Tropical Africa: Is Medical Pluralism a Hinderance or a Resource?" in Akhtar (ed) - Health and Disease op.cit., p.13. Koumare describes traditional medicine as the total body of knowledge and techniques which are "based on the socio-cultural and religious bedrock of African communities" and are used "for the diagnosis, prevention or elimination of imbalances in physical, mental or social well-being."

79. Oliver Ransford - "Bid the Sickness Cease;" Disease in the History of Black Africa (John Murray Publishers, London 1983) pp. 33 and 206.

80. Frantz Fanon - A Dying Colonialism (Pelican Books, 1970) p. 102; Maryinez Lyons - "Disease, Medicine and Social History in Northeastern Congo: Sleeping Sickness 1885-1940" (African History Seminar, S.O.A.S. Wednesday 9/3/83 pp. 5-6)

81. See S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Conf. M.P. 106/1920 - Letter by Alhaji Omaru Enclosure (A).

82. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Ronietta 43/16 - Medical Dispenser, Port Loko to P.M.O. 19/7/16.

83. *ibid.* D.C. Stanley to Colonial Secretary 27/6/16.

84. *ibid.* Colonial Secretary to P.M.O. 26/8/16.

85. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Ronietta 65/1916 - Dr Hart to Colonial Secretary 20/10/16.

86. *ibid.* J.M. Clark District Medical Officer to P.M.O. 20/10/16.

87. *ibid.* P.M.O. to Colonial Secretary 23/10/16.

88. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645 - Senior Sanitary Officer to Principal Medical Officer 4/9/16.

89. P.R.O. C.O. 267/570/23387 - Annual Report Karene District 1915; P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/22575 - Annual Report Karene 1916.

90. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645 - "Extracts from Minutes of the 95th meeting of the Joint African Medical Staff Committee 5/12/16.

91. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/40815 - Quarantine Ordinance 1916, Anti-smallpox Regulation No. 5, 1916; See also Gazette 5/8/16.
92. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/42910 - Annual Report on the Medical Department 1916.
93. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Circular Conf. G.H. 155/16 - Bonar Law to Officer Administering the Government, 8/7/16.
94. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/6116 - P.M.O. to Colonial Secretary 8/1/17; "Report on Crescents admitted into the Nursing Home, Freetown, Sierra Leone," 1916 by J.C. Murphy Acting Provincial Medical Officer 20/10/16.
95. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/42910. Annual Report on the Medical Department 1916.
96. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 89/1915 - Senior Sanitary Officer to P.M.O. 2/9/15; Acting Colonial Secretary to President, Advisory Board Wilberforce Tax District, 21/10/15.
97. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/52645 - "Report of Dr. Wood."
98. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/42910 - Sanitary Report on Freetown 1916.
99. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department - Major Litchford 2/W.I.R. to Colonial Secretary 15/11/15 in W.D. 119/15; Colonial Secretary to D.A.A. and Q.M.G. 21/12/15; Major Litchford to Colonial Secretary, 4/1/16.
100. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 35/16 - Major F. Anderson, Commanding Detachment, W.A.F.F., Daru to Headquarters 4/4/16.
101. P.R.O. C.O. 267/572/55487 - Wilkinson to Bonar Law 3/11/16.
102. The Sierra Leone Church Missions, 40th Annual Report pp. 44-42.
103. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/40965 - Northern Sherbro Annual Report 1916.
104. See Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, Annual Report 1913-14 (F.B.C. Library) p.32; C.M.R.November 1913 pp.677-678; Church Missionary Gazette December 1913 p. 368 and January 1914 p. 15 (F.B.C. Library).
105. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 106/1920 - Letter by Alhaji Omaru from French Guinea, Enclosure (A)
106. ibid D.C. Bowden Commissioner, Northern Province.
107. The Sierra Leone Church Missions 41st Annual Report. Rev. T.S. Johnson Annual Sermon 5/12/16, pp. 18-19.
108. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 106/1920 - Father Flottat,

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Chapter 6: THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Background to the outbreak

When the "Spanish" influenza eventually reached Sierra Leone in August 1918, many in their bewilderment saw it as a divine "test"¹ intended to show that "Sierra Leoneans have for some time been getting out of hand and...greatly needed a reminder that they are temple children." The paralysis of church work at Ebenezer Circuit, the feverish resort to prayers and open-air services by the Christian Conductors' Union, with "churches empty of worshippers,"² coupled with the devastating spread of the disease and its unprecedented death toll, convinced many that "the visitation is a stranger in our history and in our land."³ By September, local interpretations of the crisis had become deeply reminiscent of the increasing disobedience of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sin. It was therefore urged that the epidemic be called "Man hu,"⁴ (an obvious corruption of "manna") meaning "what is it?"⁵ after the Israelites' interpretation of the rounded objects like coriander seeds sent to them as food from heaven.

The considerable efforts made by officialdom to improve health conditions and sanitation in Sierra Leone after 1916 had done little to cushion the dependency against diseases introduced by sea-borne traffic.⁶ In August 1918, the H.M.S. "Mantua" sailed into Freetown harbour from Plymouth, its crew badly infected with influenza. Within three weeks, the

disease spread with devastating consequences⁷ far surpassing those of the smallpox epidemic.

The Influenza pandemic of 1918 has only recently begun to attract scholarly attention;⁸ but the available literature is still patchy and skewed towards Southern Africa. Although influenza constituted "the most lethal outbreak of disease in World history," and though the mortality rate resulting from the disease alone rose to a total of one million in Africa,⁹ the history of its impact on the continent has not received the attention it deserves.¹⁰ This chapter examines the impact of influenza on Sierra Leone between August and November 1918. It is here posited that apart from insanitary conditions, the vulnerable position of the port of Freetown, food shortages and malnutrition in war time, made the population very susceptible to the ravages of the pandemic. Moreover, the suddenness of the outbreak, the rapidity of its spread, the diversity of the types and symptoms manifested by the disease, thwarted both official and local efforts to contain the crisis. So traumatic was the impact that the 1918 pandemic is still spoken of with awe by those who experienced it.

Up to August 1918 (according to Dr. Tweedy) it was impossible to find "a really healthy person in Sierra Leone." Tweedy argued that diseases like dysentery were clearly the result of poor diet and the precarious "means of livelihood" in the community. Although £44,337 of the total revenue of £550,000 was allocated to the medical and sanitary departments, hospitals were still "few, small and poor" in the Colony.¹¹

In the Protectorate where 95 per cent of the population lived, it was an "exaggeration to say that one per cent are benefited in any way by government medical and sanitary work..."

The existing system of dual control continued to exercise a baneful influence on sanitary developments and "prejudices in matters of health relating to the European and the native" did little to ameliorate the situation.¹² The Weekly News was deeply critical of a system which refused "native applicants" admission at the Colonial Hospital, and continued to exclude "African medicos" from the W.A.M.S. in the "present war emergencies."¹³ In the face of economic backwardness and dwindling trade returns, Wilkinson attributed "the main cause of ill health" to "distress" among the population.¹⁴ It was therefore "an exception to find a person...free from some pathogenic parasites whether it be of skin, tissues, blood or intestines."¹⁵

Serious technical problems stood in the way of reform. Apart from the Quarantine and Public Health Protectorate Ordinances, the health laws of the Colony were badly "scattered" "complicated" and "unsuitable for application." Assisted by two European inspectors and 18 African officers, the Medical Officer of Health for Freetown was responsible for sanitary work, scavenging and conservancy in Freetown with a population of 34,000 and about 7,000 huts and houses. Hindered by lack of expertise and staff shortages, and encumbered by "varied duties," sanitary inspectors could only visit each hut or house once in five weeks thus allowing

ample time for anything of an insanitary nature to take place in the interim. The amount of sanitary work done in 1916 was therefore inadequate and the smallpox epidemic helped to reduce the frequency of visitations and the oiling of wells and cesspits to reduce stegomyia.¹⁶ Extensive quarantine measures had been passed in 1916 but by 1917, the authorities found it impossible to undertake medical examination of all ships calling at the harbour¹⁷ and the lack of fumigating machinery was to lead to the prevalence of malaria on board vessels calling at Freetown.¹⁸ The situation was all the more serious as Freetown was a "routing and convoy" port during the war.¹⁹

The period preceding the outbreak of influenza was characterised by much controversy between medical authorities in Sierra Leone over what could be called the "malaria question." By early 1918, the results of an inquiry conducted at Liverpool and Glasgow showed that the two main sources of malaria on the West Coast of Africa were Freetown and Dakar. Accordingly, staff Surgeon E.J. Steegmann was detailed to Freetown to ascertain how effectively the powers of the naval, military and civil authorities could be coordinated in a bid to prevent the infection of ships.²⁰ Although the Senior Sanitary Officer in Sierra Leone doubted the findings of the inquiry,²¹ the malaria question clearly pointed to the insanitary condition of Freetown as was shown by the Steegmann report. Though nothing could have been done in the circumstances, it is worth noting that (as Steegmann argued) the major problems then revolved around the prevalence of mosquitoes, artificial breeding places,

defective drains and swampy grounds.

In addition to malaria, 700 wells promoted dysentery and intestinal diseases. Furthermore, the canalisation work recommended by Sir Ronald Ross had been "allowed to fall into decay." In most places, the ground was "rough...uneven and eminently suitable for the collection of puddles and pools..."²² The situation was not helped by the strained relations between the Governor, his medical staff and sanitary officers. Although Steegmann recommended that the problem be treated as a "war emergency,"²³ staff shortages and lack of funds made it necessary to defer action until after the war;²⁴ the general clamour by medical authorities for better sanitation therefore came into conflict with the Governor's call for economy and "modest beginnings."²⁵

The consequences of inaction were clearly disastrous, for the vulnerable position of the Freetown harbour and increased shipping activity in 1918 were to make the spread of influenza inevitable. Possessing the only natural harbour in West Africa, Freetown came to assume increased importance in World War I as a naval station²⁶ attracting ships not only from Britain, but from South Africa, South America, French possessions and Gibraltar.²⁷ By June 1915, the demands of trade had led to considerable progress being made on the new export wharf. By November the new jetty at the Freetown wharf had been completed, but financial constraints meant that work on the export wharf had to stop until after the war.²⁸ Between 1915 and 1917, there was a considerable lull in shipping activity at the Freetown harbour due chiefly to

the expulsion of German shipping,²⁹ the withdrawal of over 1,200 steam vessels from their normal employment by the Admiralty in June 1915,³⁰ the losses to British allied and neutral shipping through enemy action in the first nine months of 1916³¹ and the congestion of vessels at home ports especially at Liverpool.³²

If up until 1917 the dislocation of shipping activity continued to paralyse industries, trade and traffic on the West African coast,³³ by 1918, the fortunes of mercantile shipping as far as the Freetown harbour was concerned, were radically altered by many factors which inter alia facilitated the transmission of influenza. 1918 was a good year for shipping activity in terms of the number of vessels and tonnage which entered and left the port. This radical shift was chiefly a function of "the successful keeping of the seas," the success of the allied navies in "maintaining a path through the perilous seas of 1918" and the efficiency of the convoy system especially at a time when the submarine menace from Germany was most threatening.³⁴ Whilst in pre-war days it was an exception to have two or three ships in the harbour at any one time, in 1918 "as many as forty to fifty have been counted together."³⁵ By 1918 also, the port was serving as a connecting link in the great shipping convoy system.³⁶ So busy was the port during 1918, that custom officers were taxed to their utmost in attempts to cope with the phenomenal increase in work required by the Merchant Shipping Act.³⁷

The extent of the demographic impact and the widespread

mortality rates caused by the pandemic could partially be explained by the severe food shortages and consequent undernourishment which preceded the outbreak and rendered the population particularly vulnerable to the virus. The problem of food and rice shortages did not suddenly rear its head in 1916. Up to 1908, the Protectorate was "capable of producing sufficient rice for home consumption and a margin for export"³⁸ but the terrible famine of 1910³⁹ was to force officialdom to turn its attention more seriously to agricultural matters. The acute shortage of rice and other articles of food in 1910 foreshadowed the shape of things to come on the eve of the outbreak of influenza. 1916 was marked by dire food shortages⁴⁰ and this did not fail to attract the attention of a very hostile press.⁴¹ At a time when the scarcity of sugar was making itself felt,⁴² the movement of troops from Freetown via Mabanta to Wongkufu, after their return from active service, was to impinge significantly on the already depleted supplies of rice in the Protectorate.⁴³

In August 1914, Governor Merewether had set up a Food Committee to deal with the local food supply. The committee had fixed minimum prices of the main articles of food and made it an offence by proclamation, to sell foodstuff above the regulated prices. By 1916 however, the lack of machets and inflated prices worsened the food situation considerably and forced the government to import larger quantities of rice flour and cabin bread biscuits to meet the needs of the population.⁴⁴ Chiefly abuses in the Protectorate coupled with the compulsory purchases and requisitioning of rice by

government officials were also to stifle government's efforts to deal with the situation.⁴⁵

In Sherbro District, the sandy nature of the soil continued to prevent the cultivation of rice and forced the people on to an insufficient cassava crop.⁴⁶ Until the harvesting of the new crop in late 1916, in Batkanu (Karene District) the food scarcity was the most serious since 1910;⁴⁷ to the north east, in Koinadugu district, subsidiary crops such as sweet potatoes and cassava had to make up for the deficiency.⁴⁸ On the whole, 1916 went down on record as "a year of partial famine when rice reached the extraordinary price of 25 pence for a Colonial bushel of 84 lbs.⁴⁹ Conditions had improved by 1917 but the threat of famine was accentuated by the destruction of the original rain forests of Sierra Leone and the desertion of vast acres of land after a few years farming. Many places lost their soil, the bare rock being exposed by erosion during the heavy rains when streamlets became rushing torrents.⁵⁰ If the Food Committee succeeded in maintaining prices at a reasonable level, the generally high cost of living⁵¹ was still exerting severe strains on many families.⁵² It was in this context of shortage that Wilkinson advocated the teaching of Agricultural Education and the cultivation of more permanent crops, this at a time when the same questions were being considered in Nigeria.⁵³

The general hardship caused by the war was to be clearly reflected in the war bonus controversy which erupted in 1917.⁵⁴ The controversy revolved around the different rates of additional payment to be made to European, West Indian and

African employees in the Civil Service in order to help them cushion the strains of war. The situation was clearly an emergency for by 1917 "government offices, mercantile firms and other establishments," were pursuing a policy of retrenchment. Many able bodied persons therefore joined the ranks of the unemployed. Vigorous demands were therefore made for war bonus by West Indian fitters in the Railway Department to help maintain their families in Sierra Leone and in the West Indies.⁵⁵ By April 1918, African Civil servants who found it difficult "to meet the abnormally increased cost of living...increased taxes and the necessary demands of our wives and families..." had joined the general clamour for war bonus.⁵⁶

If on the eve of the outbreak of influenza, the cost of living was 75% more than in pre-war days"⁵⁷ 1918 itself was a particularly bad year for the rice crop.⁵⁸ The persistent early rains which began in March prevented planters from clearing the mass of brush wood and timber which accumulated as a strong secondary growth and covered land best suited for cultivation.⁵⁹ In Karene, conditions were so bleak that the D.C. feared "a re-occurrence of the year 1910."⁶⁰ In August when influenza erupted, labourers engaged on first class road construction in Bonthe were caught up in a desperate effort to find their own food in the absence of free rations."⁶¹ Very close to the outbreak of influenza therefore, widespread food shortages, "emaciation...suffering, and...distinct physical deterioration" with "very lean bellies,"⁶² were to ensure easy targets for the debilitating effects of the virus. The Weekly News perhaps best summed it up when it

argued that the epidemic found "a large proportion of the poorer sections of our community ill-nourished on account of the hardness of the times."⁶³

THE OUTBREAK

The occurrence of influenza in 1918 was not entirely new in the dependency. Medical reports before 1918 mentioned isolated cases in the Freetown hospital, 16 in the Freetown gaol, one at Moyamba, five at Bo and one at Daru.⁶⁴ What made it so different in 1918 was the scale of the outbreak, the death toll which accompanied it and the diversity of the symptoms which baffled medical experts. At a time when the sanitary affairs of war ships were completely outside civilian control, the H.M.S. "Mantua" arrived in the harbour on 15th August 1918 with "cases of...`Spanish Influenza' on board."⁶⁵ In the evening two European doctors called on Wilkinson to apprise him of "the danger" and as the seriousness of the risk was appreciated, the Governor secured assurances that no communication was being allowed between the "Mantua" and the shore. But between the 15th and the 16th, the ship was coaled by local labourers ("without my cognisance or that of my sanitary authourities.") Although the Senior Sanitary Officer had advised that the labourers be landed afterwards at the quarantine station, the naval authorities did not observe this precaution and the men mixed freely with others on their return to the premises of the coaling company.

The Mantua lay in the harbour for eleven days, its infected character "known to all." Just before her departure on the

25th August, an orderly of the Royal Army Medical Corps was landed in Freetown and this elicited serious protests from the junior medical officers. It required the intervention of the Governor to return the man to the ship, but the damage had been done; very soon the disease broke out among the Royal Army Medical Corps and added to the spread already begun by the labourers of the Mabella Coaling station.⁶⁶

During the week ending 24 August, the prevalence of catarrhal conditions of the nose and throat was noted by medical authorities, but this was not sufficient enough "to excite comment." Post-mortem examinations conducted on two labourers of the Coaling Company between 23rd and 26th August showed in one case that 24 hours before admission the patient had gone to bed with "fever and cough" and that he had become delirious about 12 hours afterwards. The autopsy revealed broncho-pneumonia involving both lungs and this was noted as being quite unusual in an adult; in the second case, the heart showed evidence of pericarditis. On Monday 26th August, many people flocked to the Colonial Hospital and Cline Town dispensary seeking treatment for "sore throat, headache and pains in the chest"⁶⁷ and this provided the first inkling of "a new disease...among the community..."⁶⁸

By 27th August, all out-patients departments were massively crowded as Drs. Wood and Wright contended with "symptoms...new to them." Many Syrians complained of "sudden illness" and an examination of a European Assistant of one of the firms showed that both lungs were "nearly solid, his tongue furred" and his "pulse rapid." Seven other cases

among the Syrians and one African showed "subsequently that the disease was...influenza."⁶⁹

The week ending 31st August was certainly the most critical phase. Influenza spread with "remarkable rapidity" and was in most cases marked by complications of the heart and lungs. Matters were aggravated by a serious depletion of the medical staff as five government doctors were attacked. Conditions had not improved the following week and death returns showed "a very perceptible increase." During this week, the disease reached its peak; the death toll rose from 28 and 34, registered at the Colonial Hospital between 1st and 2nd September, to 74 and 72, as registered on the 6th and 8th. During the week beginning 8th September, the death toll had subsided and by the 11th it had fallen to 40 a day at the Colonial Hospital. The doctors were soon able to resume work. The Coaling Company managed to procure the full complement of labourers required and many trading firms also resumed business.⁷⁰ Shops were also partially opened to allow people to buy provisions. "The dismal aspects of the streets did not return..."⁷¹ and by Tuesday 18th September, the number of registered deaths had diminished to 17.⁷²

Widely attributed by the press to the "fatuous contest...among nations," influenza appeared to have followed a well defined course in Freetown. In the west end along Pademba Road and Grassfields, there was relative immunity to the disease but from the Government wharf on to Kissy Road, Fourah Bay Road and Fula Town, many succumbed to the attack. The fact that by 31st August, mortality rates resulting from

the disease had not been publicly announced, created a false impression that the doctors had it "well in hand."⁷³ By August, the disease had spread to the Protectorate. It was introduced in Karene by boat and canoe men from Freetown and by many Limbas fleeing the capital. At Port Loko, influenza found a ready ally in congestion - between 10 and 40 people living in one house;⁷⁴ it continued well into November⁷⁵ claiming many victims.⁷⁶

An examination of the most common symptoms of the different clinical types of influenza is instructive in order to understand why the disease was so debilitating. A rise in temperature, aches and pains were the initial symptoms, with the tongue furred and whitish green. Doctors found tonsillitis and pharyngitis in practically every case and in the fatal ones, the throat assumed a "dark reddish blue colour," became very dry, congested and extremely foetid, causing difficulties in breathing. Gastric disturbance was also common and was marked in the less fatal cases, by a disinclination to food.

In the more severe cases, there was bilious vomiting, constipation and pleurisy. The most fatal were the cardiac symptoms. The heart "sounds were booming" and post-mortem examinations showed myocarditis.⁷⁷ Nervous manifestations were marked by fear and anxiety; sleeplessness was very frequent and twitching of the upper lip was especially evident if the patient attempted to speak. The period of convalescence was usually accompanied by great weakness, depression, giddiness and breathlessness due to the weakening

of the heart muscles. Apart from broncho-pneumonia a few cases of meningitis, parotitis, middle ear infections and paralysis of the soft palate, complicated many cases.⁷⁸ So widespread were these symptoms that "almost every other person one comes across had some personal or relative experience" to relate.⁷⁹

The origin of influenza in Sierra Leone was to cause much controversy in official circles. In 1916, Captain C.F.Harford of the Royal Army Medical Corps had, in a very illuminating paper, isolated influenza as one of the major and "inevitable accompaniments of war," likely to pose a threat to the colonies,⁸⁰ but very little could have been done to forestall an outbreak. Though the source of the Sierra Leone outbreak was not readily known, influenza, by August, had become a worldwide phenomenon. Since its occurrence in Freetown, it appeared in the Gambia, on the Gold Coast, in French Guinea and in Senegal, though in the Far Eastern Colonies, the accompanying disaster did not approximate that in Sierra Leone.⁸¹

To determine precisely when influenza was first introduced in Sierra Leone in 1918, is impossible as influenza of a very mild type was observed in Freetown and the neighbourhood "for some weeks before it manifested itself in a general outburst." But there was no doubt that influenza was "introduced into this Colony by vessels arriving from the United Kingdom or other infected ports."⁸² With the successful elimination of German shipping,⁸³ Britain, by 1918 had come to dominate shipping activity in terms of the number

of sailing and steam ships which called at and cleared from the port,⁸⁴ and in terms of the number of vessels with cargo and those in ballast.⁸⁵

Out of 410 vessels which called at Freetown, in 1918, 341 were British. In fact, shipping returns show that by 1918, French and Belgian ships were no longer regular callers at the port.⁸⁶ A serious problem surrounding the outbreak of influenza in Sierra Leone in 1918, was that the information then at the disposal of medical authorities regarding the global outbreak was scanty. Mr Read at the Colonial Office however did know of its spread "on the Gold Coast, in Nigeria, German East Africa, Nyassaland and Gambia."⁸⁷ Because influenza was not notifiable under the Quarantine Ordinance it was possible, argued Dr. Allan, that a ship may have arrived with the disease on board, only that it was not grave enough to have attracted the attention of the medical authorities. What could not be contested is that on board the "Mantua", influenza had assumed such epidemic proportions that precautions were needed to prevent it from getting ashore."⁸⁸

The flood of reports in the wake of the epidemic, and the apparent inconsistencies regarding dates, led the Colonial Office to suspect that certain officials were culpable for not having taken prompt action to contain the disease at the initial stages. Mr. Calder found the Governor particularly reprehensible for not having taken the initiative - "the inertia shown is a lamentable result of the Governor's boycott of his own medical staff" - and therefore requested

from him "precise information" regarding "the outbreak, spread and decline of the epidemic."

It was obvious that a purely medical problem had assumed a clearly administrative dimension and the questions to be answered then were -whether the "Mantua" was simply one of a convoy, her port of departure and when she sailed from there, what ports she called at before reaching Freetown, when the disease broke out on board the ship or other ships, the number of cases of influenza on board; the nature of her cargo, the other ships in the convoy if any, and whether influenza existed at its port of departure, or at any port where she called, or at the port of departure of any ship in her convoy or at any ports where such ships called.⁸⁹ Wilkinson was also to be interviewed at the Advisory Sanitary and Medical Committee for Tropical Africa.⁹⁰ Although the Rear Admiral of H.M.S. Africa argued that influenza could have been introduced from diverse sources other than the Mantua⁹¹ and though it was suspected that the Cluny Castle and the Malta may have been responsible,⁹² the available evidence pointed to the Mantua as the source of infection for when it sailed from Plymouth and a case developed immediately after sailing, the disease was raging at that port.⁹³

MANAGEMENT OF THE OUTBREAK

The suddenness of the outbreak, the failure to determine the origins of the disease and the rapidity of its spread, forced a collaboration between government and tribal authorities in a desperate bid to contain the epidemic. Initial measures included gargling of the throat, washing of the mouth,

treatment of the expectoration and washing the nose with some mild antiseptic. Two dispensaries, for preventive and curative treatment were opened at Kissy Road and Campbell Street respectively. Handbills stating precautionary measures were distributed throughout the town and similar notices were placed in the press and the Gazette.

The supply of throat gargle and disinfectant intensified applications for prophylactic medicines which became extremely popular. As in the case of smallpox, sanitary inspectors and disinfecting gangs visited the most insanitary and congested houses. These were clearly stop-gap measures designed to contain an apparently uncontrollable crisis that was bound to run its course. Unable to cope with the large numbers seeking admission at the Colonial Hospital, the government opened an auxiliary hospital at the Government Model School,⁹⁴ where volunteers distributed food and medicines to the patients.⁹⁵

In the early stages, a good purge was administered; quinine was used to combat the malaria parasites, aspirin for the aches and pains and a hypodermic injection of morphia for broncho-pneumonia. On the whole, there was much trial and error. While "Veronal" and "Trional" proved unreliable, cough mixtures and tonics helped in ameliorating the symptoms.⁹⁶ Experiments in the prisons showed that cases detected much earlier responded to treatment better than "the ordinary native...left to his own devices..."⁹⁷ By January 1919, a bonus of "three weeks extra pay" had been awarded to African officers (£25 to nursing sisters) who showed

"devotion to duty" during the height of the epidemic.⁹⁸

Completely baffled by this "strange visitor,"⁹⁹ the population turned to a wide range of local remedies and socio-cultural practices that in some instances represented a cross between traditional and western medicine. Many suggested the burning of tar as a disinfectant.¹⁰⁰ One Justin Paul urged the government to fumigate the town by burning sulphur in incinerators. He had experimented widely with local herbs, drinking a concoction of "tea bush," bush tea, lime leaves and "doni" or "oree" (an oily substance used as medication for pains and cold) which he recommended to the public. He also suggested various physical exercises to contain the impact of the disease.¹⁰¹ Abdul Aziz was to endorse the use of tea bush ("*occimum viride*") as a laxative and antiseptic and for clearing the mucous coats of the throat. Aziz recommended good nourishing diets such as eggs, "cowfoot soup" chicken broth and "a whiff of brandy or good rum." During convalescence, he argued that the best "native tonic" was "gbangba root" (which contained strychnine) boiled with spice, finger root and "egbesi", ("*morinda crititollia*) known to contain quinine.¹⁰² So popular was traditional medicine that many came to believe that the victims were those who had stuck to western medicine.¹⁰³ "Homely brews" like "ojuologbo" were therefore taken with a "religious fervour."¹⁰⁴

The resort to local herbs and medicine by the public was to reflect the problems encountered by government to contain the disease; it was also intended to serve as a serious

indictment of what the press described (albeit unjustifiably) as "a lack of skilled nursing and unfamiliarity with the peculiarities of the disease...;"¹⁰⁵ "the doctors are at present flabbergasted."¹⁰⁶ Influenza had started so slightly that it was treated as an ordinary cold;¹⁰⁷ the naval funerals - there were three on one day-with the ceremonials attending them, should alone have sufficed to warn the general public of the danger but no heed was taken and Wilkinson's two medical informants were ridiculed as "alarmists. I myself heard the opinions of senior men quoted against theirs." In fact, a signal was sent to the military authorities about the imminent landing of an officer of the R.A.M.C. but both the Officer Commanding The Troops and the Senior Medical Officer were absent. Dr Allan, Acting Senior Sanitary Officer learned of the outbreak "for the first time" through the Governor's private secretary. Though Wilkinson could impute no wrong doing to the civil-sanitary authorities for the way in which the Mantua was coaled, he agreed that the precautions taken to protect the labourers were wholly inadequate.¹⁰⁸

Many patients were to die for want of care and attention either because all of the inmates of a house were sick or because they were deserted by the other residents. In some cases, patients were actually turned out by the other occupants. There were further problems in getting many victims to move to the Model School Hospital and when this was eventually achieved, the hospital became badly congested; some called there voluntarily, others were taken there by their friends and some were picked up in the streets in a

"moribund condition."¹⁰⁹ Later, some absconded and others were removed by their friends.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, doctors found it difficult to discover traces of the virus in more than 60 blood films examined in the early stages and the use of quinine was of little value in "spiky" influenzal temperature cases; in others, it proved very depressing.¹¹¹ The situation was compounded by a simultaneous outbreak of measles in the Central ward and smallpox in the East ward of Freetown.¹¹² At the same time, Kunso in Bombali was found to be an endemic centre of yellow fever.¹¹³ Staff shortages added to the problem. With nearly all the doctors down with the "flu", Dr. Allan was the only officer available by 7th September to meet the heavy demands from every section of the community and during the previous "black and dreadful week", the mayor had to make arrangements for the burial of the "abnormal deaths" by volunteer grave diggers.¹¹⁴

At Hastings, matters were complicated by the premature removal of the resident dispenser, 12 months before the outbreak.¹¹⁵ Dr. Jenner Wright, an African doctor opined that during the epidemic, the Director of Medical Services shut himself up in the lighthouse and left the care of Freetown to him.¹¹⁶ On the whole it was the diversity of the clinical types and symptoms which compounded both official and local efforts to contain the outbreak. In some cases, influenza was diagnosed as "coryza", "toxaemia" and yellow fever;¹¹⁷ to the public, the symptoms "lean more in the direction of smallpox."¹¹⁸

THE IMPACT

As doctors battled in the hospitals with what had become a nationwide emergency, influenza struck with devastating results dislocating business in both the mercantile and official sectors,¹¹⁹ and halting the train service which was only resumed on 16th September.¹²⁰ Because of government's orders to close all schools temporarily, the distribution of reports at the Annie Walsh Memorial School had to be cancelled; so were lectures on electricity at Fourah Bay College, "till more favourable health conditions return..."¹²¹ At the Methodist Boys' High School where the Rev. A.W. Moulton died from the disease, practically every boarder (except two) was bedridden.¹²² Generally, the disease aggravated an already worsening food situation and as the "very limited resources" of individual families were stretched to their utmost in providing medical comforts for their sick,¹²³ employees like 4th grade clerk M.P.A. Nicolls were forced to request advances of salaries to cushion the burden "entailed by the ravages of the ...epidemic."¹²⁴

As the "shadow of death" hung over Freetown, influenza generated a feverish urban-rural migration often with disastrous consequences. In early September, 40 Lokos bound for Port Loko were drowned in the process at Fintleh Point.¹²⁵ On the whole, August to September 1918 was a rather gloomy period in Sierra Leone when even the atmosphere was "draped in sadness" and the streets "barren of pedestrians."¹²⁶

In many ways, influenza was a major test of Sierra Leone's

social, cultural, economic and political institutions in the circumstances of 1918. This was the "worst pandemic in the history of man on earth"¹²⁷ claiming some six million lives world wide,¹²⁸ and a run through its demographic impact in Sierra Leone is instructive. The disease was to cause a death toll unparalleled in the recorded history of the country; so pervasive was its accompanying "dry hacking cough", colds, rheumatism and related ills,¹²⁹ that the Nursing Home "was full to overflowing,"¹³⁰ and as patients were admitted in all stages of influenza or pneumonia, the death toll was very high.¹³¹ Within three weeks of the outbreak, 790 deaths were reported in the city alone;¹³² within a week only - between 30th August and 5th September - 223 deaths were registered. To these figures must be added the vast numbers who were ill in bed and totally incapacitated for business of any kind..."¹³³

September was regarded as the "Black Month" in the history of Sierra Leone when undertakers had the busiest time on record. No measurement was taken of corpses "as in normal times" and very few mourners accompanied their dead to the grave. "Never was there a time in the history of this country when trenches were dug to bury its dead...about twenty and thirty coffins placed in the grave yard together for days without graves to put them in." No less than six trenches were dug at Ascension Town to bury paupers. In a bid to avoid a government "who with red tape will make matters worse by useless correspondence..." volunteer grave diggers like the Rev. F.H. Johnson, ensured the burial of abandoned corpses.¹³⁴

By October, Wilkinson put the death toll at 1,000 in Freetown alone; many traders died and there was a heavy mortality on the ships in the harbour. On the flagship herself there were over 50 deaths. Approximately 70% of the population in Freetown was affected and "deaths are known to be very numerous" in the Protectorate also.¹³⁵ Although both sexes were affected, of a total of 815 registered deaths at the Colonial Hospital, 472 were males and 343 females. The death toll was particularly high among persons from 15 to 35 years.¹³⁶ As more bizarre tales of deaths swept through the city, Government House was flooded with requests for free coffins, for the removal of the duty on timber and a suspension of the burial duty paid to the City Council.¹³⁷ It is doubtful whether the precarious state of the economy allowed government to honour these requests.

Every sphere of life was affected. In the prisons, 256 out of 290 prisoners suffered from broncho-pneumonia and three from cardiac failure;¹³⁸ at the Colonial hospital, the death rate was put at 19.8% whilst at the Nursing Home, several of the 48 patients suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis.¹³⁹ At Kossuh Town and Bambara Town, there were horrific tales of corpses "enshrined in potato leaves and vine."¹⁴⁰ At Kissy where there was only one dispenser, the "flu" attacked both adults and young and climatic factors such as dampness coupled with the insanitary conditions at both the Male and Female Incurable Hospitals, aided the spread.¹⁴¹ In the Methodist circuits at Wellington, Hastings and York, influenza caused "much suffering and many deaths and added to the burdens we have had to bear."¹⁴²

In the Protectorate where there was little medical care, no district escaped the hazards of the epidemic. At Kambia in Karene District, the graves of Tonko-Limba corpses stretched along a distance of a quarter mile.¹⁴³ Influenza claimed many lives in the Railway District¹⁴⁴ and paralysed the entire community at the Port of Sherbro with a mortality rate of 50.¹⁴⁵ The installation of popular chiefs in, and the return of the Kategbe family to Northern Sherbro in 1917 had led to a massive influx of population in the district;¹⁴⁶ in Ronietta,¹⁴⁷ overcrowding resulted from attempts to evade the hut tax by joining the roofs of houses together. These conditions provided ready victims for influenza. The disease reached Koinadugu in September and claimed many lives especially in the southern and western parts of the district.¹⁴⁸

The authorities found it difficult to determine, even approximately, the numbers affected by influenza. Though many sought treatment, some avoided the hospitals and dispensaries, whilst others migrated to the Protectorate. Attempts to determine the case incidence among certain groups proved futile and the Police force, then 180 strong with 130 reporting sick, had to be used as an index of the impact and spread of the disease. The approach was based on the fact that the force was recruited from most groups in Freetown. This gave a case incidence of 73.2% and was used to reflect the percentage affected in Freetown generally. It meant that at least between 20,000 and 24,548 people were affected in Freetown out of a total population of 34,000. But there were problems in determining the numbers which died from

influenza. Many corpses were buried without the usual certificates of registration and because the cemetery staff was affected by the "flu", not every burial was recorded. Many migrated to the Protectorate during the crisis and so made it difficult for the authorities to keep proper records.

Though the Registrar General's Office put the death toll at 968 for the period 23rd August to 18th September,¹⁴⁹ it was definitely far higher, for comparative figures show an increase of 1,506 deaths between 1917 and 1918 (1,895 for 1917 and 3,401 for 1918). That the toll was clearly higher is also supported by the fact that in the 1918 returns, no figures were entered for Koinadugu, Sherbro and Ronietta districts, and the port of Sulima. The enormity of the crisis could be appreciated from returns for Wilberforce where the average death rate between 1915 and 1917 was 60 (59 in 1915, 62 in 1916 and 60 in 1917). In 1918, it was more than doubled to 135.¹⁵⁰ Influenza must have further depleted the already dwindling Krio population, a factor that by 1918 was beginning to attract the attention of the authorities.¹⁵¹

When other variables such as famine and migration are taken into consideration, the demographic impact of influenza can easily be appreciated. Influenza must have shattered the natural resistance of many to other diseases for one month after it had subsided, D.C. Addison was attributing the high rate of infant mortality to the prevalence of venereal diseases.¹⁵² The disaster was best summed up by Knox-Hooke thus - "...No history of this land can tell of conflict parallel to this...Tumultuous were the average deaths, when

more than fifty souls a day collapsed..."¹⁵³

It was this disastrous sweep of influenza that was to exercise a baneful influence on the supply of labour. In the week following the coaling of the "Mantua", 500 out of 600 labourers were absent from work at the Coaling station; at Government House all 20 servants were incapacitated and the Governor himself had to do their work.¹⁵⁴ Apart from disrupting work at the port, all trading firms and public offices were compelled to close down. "Labour became almost unobtainable...because of the number stricken with sickness."¹⁵⁵ Because contractors failed to send food, prisoners had to carry their own food and the magnitude of the death toll led to prison gangs being deployed as grave diggers.¹⁵⁶

Influenza sapped the vitality of the Police force and Customs staff; at the Colonial Hospital, half the medical staff and nearly all labourers were badly affected. This made it difficult to secure temporary help for the nurses.¹⁵⁷ The dearth of labour meant that goods were abandoned in the King's shed, unentered and uncleared and therefore became liable to higher rents.¹⁵⁸ By September, the impact of influenza made it impossible to get labourers for the construction, improvement and maintenance of roads in the Protectorate.¹⁵⁹ The same was true of conditions in Headquarter District.¹⁶⁰ At Bo, various short lengths of earthworks had been undertaken in 1918 on the Mandu-Kumrabai Road, but progress was seriously halted by the epidemic. By the end of 1918, there was only one mile to go before the Bo-

Pujehun Road was completed but "the chief impediment" was the "flu." There were therefore no permanent bridges on the road beyond Tikonko,¹⁶¹ and the proposal to convert the Kamabai-Kaballa Road through Falaba to the French frontier at Berea Futumbu, into a second class road was abandoned.¹⁶²

The effects of labour shortages were to be felt in the agricultural sector. Throughout the country, the labour force generally employed in agriculture was immobilised as influenza combined with climatic hazards to deplete the rice crop, most of which "was in ear when the disease was at its worst." There were "very few fit persons to scare away birds which consequently took their tithe of the crop."¹⁶³ Ronietta¹⁶⁴ and Karene¹⁶⁵ districts were to suffer most in this respect. The disease was partly responsible for the drop in the export of palm kernels and palm oil. In fact, not a single gallon of oil left the country in September 1918.¹⁶⁶

PUBLIC REACTION AND IMPROVEMENTS IN SANITATION

So high was the death toll in Sierra Leone that it "stirred the native population very deeply and...led the Creole at least to indulge in a very abusive press campaign against the government and its alleged carelessness and indifference in matters affecting the health of the place."¹⁶⁷ The Governor could not have summed up the situation better, for influenza was to provide an opportunity for petition writers and those imbued with nationalist thinking, to deplore what they perceived as the racist attitude of officialdom, and to emphasise the fact that "blacks and whites are all one."¹⁶⁸

The press embarked on a bitter condemnation of the Sanitary Department for concentrating only on "private dwellings" at a time when the nation had to contend with an unprecedented rate of "infant mortality...paralysis galore and pneumonia in excelsis..."¹⁶⁹

As far as the public was concerned the disease exposed the inability of the W.A.M.S. to cope with an emergency; neither was the withdrawal from the local municipality of the responsibilities which it had hitherto shouldered seen to be justified by official handling of the epidemic.¹⁷⁰ The press argued that Europeans themselves would have fared badly in the crisis in comparison with other groups, (out of 62 deaths in 1918, 46 died of non-climatic causes) but were saved by "good quarters, proper attendance and an adequate supply of medical comforts..." not generally enjoyed by the "aboriginal natives."¹⁷¹

Educated Sierra Leoneans like Faduma were to join in the general condemnation of "tenement houses", the "sewerage system" and congestion.¹⁷² In September, government attempted to exonerate itself from these charges, but the Colonial Secretary's criticisms of an alleged lack of help from the local community during the epidemic, merely exacerbated tensions between an already disgruntled Krio community and officialdom. The press countered that "the attempt to shift from the back of the Naval authorities the responsibility for the introduction" of influenza "and to place that responsibility nowhere is weak."¹⁷³

Whatever the measure of "carelessness" shown by officialdom in handling the crisis, influenza did alert sanitary officials to the need for greater improvements in sanitation. Prior to instructions issued by the Secretary of State regarding anti-malarial measures, Wilkinson had authorised the officers in charge of such measures "to divert to permanent work any sums that could be spared from direct mosquito destruction,"¹⁷⁴ and by December 1918 five gangs had been employed to undertake bush cutting and to eliminate permanent breeding places for larvae. The possibility of extending the permanent drains was also considered because the rain worn channels on Tower Hill constituted an ideal home for mosquitoes, tins and bottles which were swept down into the nullahs and hidden in the rapidly growing grass.¹⁷⁵ By February 1919, Waterloo had been declared a sanitary area, a slaughter house selected, and a market provided to "prohibit the sale of fresh meat from disgustingly dirty shops..."¹⁷⁶ It is doubtful whether such measures, had they occurred earlier, would have contained the outbreak.

The almost acrimonious debates surrounding the origins of influenza in Sierra Leone led the Secretary of State to insist on the "adoption of precautionary measures against its reintroduction ..." ¹⁷⁷ The first steps in this direction included the reading of the "Vaccination Ordinance" in the Legislative Council for the first time in October 1918.¹⁷⁸ In May 1919, the Acting Senior Sanitary Officer emphasised the need to secure legal powers for drawing up regulations dealing with influenza and to add it to the list of diseases specified in the "Quarantine Regulations;" to declare as

"infected places" all affected ports, to prevent the unauthorised landing of persons from infected ships and the unauthorised visiting of such ships by people from the shore. Anyone allowed to land was to be submitted to disinfection with a suitable disinfectant in a fumigating chamber. Farrar therefore urged the purchase of a portable steam sprayer for the purpose and were influenza to become prevalent again, leaflets, on the lines of those given in the Local Government's Board Memorandum, were to be distributed.¹⁷⁹ It was however feared that stricter quarantine rules would prevent the coaling of ships in reasonable time.¹⁸⁰

By 1920, influenza had been added to the Public Health Ordinance (No.15) of 1905 as an infectious disease,¹⁸¹ and in November 1920, additional powers were granted to the Health Officer to use his discretion to detain suspected persons for observation and to prevent boatmen and labourers from boarding infected ships. Any one guilty of "obstructing the execution of...these Regulations" was to be liable to a fine of not more than £50, or to imprisonment with hard labour for not more than six months.¹⁸² There were however major problems to overcome. Official rebuttal of public criticism of its handling of the epidemic and attempts to institute sanitary and health reforms were seriously hampered by the negative influence of influenza on the anti-malarial campaign. Malaria returns for 1918 had showed a marked decrease, but the figures were not very reliable because during the epidemic when the malaria incidence was very high, the routine examination of blood films in the laboratory was seriously interrupted and anti-malaria measures temporarily

abandoned.¹⁸³

Sanitary works were still being carried out in 1919 against all odds,¹⁸⁴ but "if health and housing conditions ...remained unsatisfactory...the heavy cost of buildings lies at the very root of these insanitary conditions..." As Wilkinson argued, the inevitable consequence of these drawbacks were" poverty and overcrowding."¹⁸⁵

Unlike colonial Malawi,¹⁸⁶ religion in Sierra Leone during World 1 was not used as a vehicle for the articulation of political protest, but the threat posed to society by the epidemic was to generate a sudden surge of religious revival and a general call for a more aggressive evangelism, punctuated by a distinct millenarian content. Given the difficulties in containing the disease at the outset, many Christians turned to religion attempting to find answers in "a moral and spiritual side to the present distress ..."¹⁸⁷ It was widely held that Christian association with "highly paganised ideas" was responsible for the crisis which was a "reminder" and punishment from God.¹⁸⁸ In the wake of the epidemic therefore, much appeal was made to biblical teachings like the prayer of King Hezekiah in a time of great national distress. It was argued that "the Lord has a controversy with us and His hand is stretched out for vengeance..." Among the failings of the disease-ridden society of Sierra Leone were, it was suggested, "the common desecration of God's Holy Day - buying and selling, stock taking and shiploading" by the mercantile firms, Europeans and Syrians.¹⁸⁹ Africans were equally culpable for

organising processions of secret societies "even on the Christian sabbath."¹⁹⁰

These drawbacks constituted the background to the wave of prophecy and eschatological teachings that preceded the outbreak of influenza in Sierra Leone and which were assuming currency in war time. Around April 1918, the prophet Waddy Harris, then on a visit to Sierra Leone had warned of some impending destruction; in September, a "Deba", (a high official) of the Bundo Secret Society at Waterloo dreamt of massive deaths and of trenches dug to bury the dead. In the dream she saw a man who said "this was only the beginning of greater calamity."¹⁹¹ In some circles, the epidemic was seen as a divine purge of witches. As Rambler argued in the Weekly News, the epidemic knew its targets and (translated from the Krio version) "as long as your hands are clean, no harm will come to you; only the witches and those found with charms will be killed".¹⁹²

The only way to salvation, it was argued, was a return to the worship of God. As the Bishop's Commissary, Archdeacon Wilson in September circularised all pastors calling for prayer meetings in four centres - at the Cathedral, Holy Trinity, Christ Church and at St. John's, Brookfields.¹⁹³ At Ebenezer Methodist Circuit, the Christian Conductors' Union held "open air" services in various centres in September and although work was dislocated in the circuit, (all ministers falling ill) influenza and the war did not constitute a "major injury" to the cause of Christianity in Sierra Leone as the literature would argue.¹⁹⁴ On the contrary, and in

spite of the epidemic, it was in West Africa that the Methodists experienced their greatest success in mission work in 1918, compared to "Papal Europe, India, China and Ceylon."¹⁹⁵ In Sierra Leone in particular, the Synod established a "City Mission" for work among the Mende; the "Extension Fund" was increased and this provided greater scope for evangelical work among groups "likely to fall into the grip of Muhammedanism..."¹⁹⁶ 1918 itself witnessed the flowering of the collaborative efforts between the Methodists and the C.M.S. in administering Fourah Bay College.¹⁹⁷ Whatever the scope of religious revivalism, the press was to argue that "prayers without proper sanitation availeth naught..."¹⁹⁸

By 1919, the spread of epidemics in wartime Sierra Leone had begun to take its toll on the populace and as economic conditions worsened, famine conditions consequent on the failure of the rice crop in 1918, set the stage for the violent onslaught against the Syrians in July 1919.

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38. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. Conf. MP 24/1908, 23/1908 Acting Governor, Haddon-Smith to Secretary of State, 4/3/08.
39. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Headquarter District 7/1910 - J. Abayomi Cole to Leslie Probyn on the "Prospect of the Production of rice and other products for the year 1910" 5/9/10. See also D. Moore-Sieray - "The Evolution of Colonial Agricultural Policy in Sierra Leone with special reference to Swamp Rice cultivation, 1908-1939" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis S.O.A.S., Univ. of London 1988)p.55. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. MP 121/1910 - Probyn to Secretary of State, 26/8/10.
40. W.M.M.S. - Minutes of Meeting, District Synod, Sierra

Leone District, Zion Church, 7th to 24th February 1916 (S.O.A.S.).

41. Throughout 1916, the columns of the Weekly News pointed to the food shortages in the Colony and Protectorate.

42. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. SECRET 7/1916. Bonar Law to Governor, 11/3/16.

43. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. War Department 42/1916 - Captain Greaves, West African Regiment to Colonial Secretary 15/4/16.

44. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. G.H. 13/17. Wilkinson to Walter Long, 12/2/17.

45. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. G.H. 22/17, M.P.C. 180/16 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 14/3/17.

46. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/17198 - Annual Report Sherbro District 1916

47. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/22575 - Annual Report Karene District 1916

48. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/2505 - Annual Report Koinadugu District 1916

49. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/23770 - Annual Report, Agricultural Department, 1916.

50. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/29262 - Annual Report Forestry Department 1917.

51. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in G.C. Conf. M.P. C.37/17 - Wilkinson to Governor, Gold Coast, 17/2/17.

52. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. M.P. Railway 228/16 - "Report of the Commission Appointed on the Petition of Sierra Leone Native Fitters respecting their pay and privileges."

53. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/35850 - Wilkinson to Walter Long, 30/6/17.

54. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/55924 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 23/10/17; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P.C.177/17, 15/12/17.

55. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/4209 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 8/1/18; see S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P.C. 214/17, 8/1/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. C. 48/18, 6.H.20, 6/5/18.

56. P.R.O. C.O. 267/577/23280 - F.A. Miller (Chief Clerk, Governor's office, President of the Sierra Leone Civil Service Association) et al to Walter Long 16/4/18; See also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Petition 12/1918; Petition 2/1918; Petition 41/1918; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Conf. 32A/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Customs 150/18.

57. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. Conf. Wilkinson to Walter Long, 27/2/18.

58. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Sherbro 66/1918 - D.C. Addison to Colonial Secretary 12/11/18.
59. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Agriculture 20/1918 - D.C. Stanley, Northern Sherbro to Colonial Secretary, 29/5/18.
60. *ibid* D.C. Karene to Colonial Secretary 4/6/18.
61. *ibid* - D.C. Stanley to Colonial Secretary, 3/8/18; Director of Agriculture, Scotland to Colonial Secretary 20/4/18.
62. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/60683 - Major S. Farrar - "Report on physical deterioration of people due to rice shortage in the Railway District" 28/6/19.
63. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18
64. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/42910 - Annual Report on the Medical Department 1916.
65. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257. Wilkinson to Walter Long, 21/10/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P. 38/18 - Wilkinson to Rear Admiral Commanding the Ninth Cruiser Squadron, H.M.S. "Africa." 28/8/18.
66. *ibid.*
67. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257 - W. Allan, Acting Senior Sanitary Officer - "An Interim Report on the Epidemic of Influenza."
68. *ibid* - Encl. to Despatch - Dr. Tweedy, P.M.O. to Colonial Secretary 8/10/18; Sierra Leone Royal Gazette, 1780, 9/11/18.
69. *ibid.*
70. *ibid*, Allan - "Interim Report."
71. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.
72. Allan - "Interim Report", *op.cit.*
73. S.L.W.N. 31/8/18. This was a special Saturday edition.
74. S.L.W.N. 19/10/18.
75. P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/26643 - Annual Report, Agricultural Department 1918.
76. S.L.W.N. 21/9/18; S.L.W.N. 5/10/18.
77. Allan - "Interim Report" *op.cit* - This means that the muscles of the heart were affected, especially in cases of sudden death, with no marked involvement of the lungs.
78. *ibid.*
79. S.L.W.N. 31/8/18

80. P.R.O. C.O. 554/32/61940 - Captain Harfood - "The Employment of the Races of Tropical Africa in Europe considered from the Health standpoint," 23/12/16.
81. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 21/10/18.
82. ibid - W. Allan, Acting Senior Sanitary Officer - "An Interim Report on the Epidemic of Influenza."
83. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. - Consular Conf. G.H. 26/16 - Acting Governor A.C. Hollis to His Britannica Majesty Consul - General, Monrovia, 4/2/16; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P. 143/16, Wilkinson to Walter Long 12/1/17.
84. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No. 302, M.P. Cus. 94/19-Acting Governor Evelyn to Milner, 11/6/19 - Annual Trade Report on the Colony 1918, Table showing comparative statement of the number and tonnage of vessels which entered and cleared from, and to foreign ports in 1913, 1917 and 1918, p.33.
85. ibid - Table XI, p.62 of Report.
85. ibid, p.36 of Report.
87. Allan "Interim Report" op.cit.
88. ibid.
89. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257 - Walter Long to Secretary, Admiralty 8/1/19.
90. P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/23340 - J.W.F. Secretary, Committee to Wilkinson 13/6/19. He was to face the Committee on 1st July 1919 whilst on leave in England.
91. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 101/1918 - T.D.L. Sheppard, Rear Admiral to Governor 29/8/18; Flag to General Captain-in-Charge M.H.Q. Encl. No.1 to letter of 29/8/18.
92. P.R.O. C.O. 267/584/8231 - Captain A. Dawson to Secretary of the Admiralty 20/1/19.
93. ibid.
94. Allan, "Interim Report" op.cit; S.L.W.N. 31/8/16; Sierra Leone Royal Gazette, 1780, 9/11/18.
95. S.L.W.N. 4/9/18; S.L.W.N. 7/9/18 - "Appeal by Mayor of the city."
96. Allan, "Interim Report" op.cit.
97. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, Dr. W.A. Young, Medical Officer in charge of Laboratory - "Report on Influenza in the Prison", Appendix to despatch.
98. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/4874 - Wilkinson to Walter Long 6/1/19; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. No. 8 M.P. 154/18.

99. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.
100. S.L.W.N. 7/9/18.
101. ibid.
102. S.L.W.N., 28/9/18.
103. S.L.W.N., 14/9/18
104. S.L.W.N., 21/9/18
105. S.L.W.N., 14/9/18
106. S.L.W.N., 7/9/18
107. Sierra Leone Royal Gazette 1780, 9/11/18
108. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257 - Wilkinson to Walter Long, 21/10/18.
109. Allan, "Interim Report" op.cit.
110. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, Bertram E. Hanson, Local Auditor to P.M.O. 24/9/18.
111. Allan, "Interim Report" op.cit.
112. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.
113. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Medical 3/1918; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Colonial Secretary 72/1918. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Sanitary 40/1918.
114. S.L.W.N., 7/9/18.
115. S.L.W.N., 21/9/18.
116. Personal Communication, J. Wright to Christopher Fyfe; Arthur Porter to Christopher Fyfe; Christopher Fyfe to F. Cole, 13/8/90 and 4/3/91.
117. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257 - Dr. Tweedy P.M.O., to Colonial Secretary 8/10/18.
118. S.L.W.N., 7/9/18.
119. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No.52. M.P. S.S. Circ. 28/1918, 27/1/19.
120. S.L.W.N., 14/9/18.
121. S.L.W.N., 31/8/18
122. 105th Annual Report W.M.M.S. 1918. (S.O.A.S.) p.85
123. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/55301 - The Sierra Leone Civil Service Association to Walter Long, 22/10/18.
124. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. M.P. Railway 37/1919 - M.P.A. Nicolls to Colonial Secretary, 7/3/19.

125. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.
126. S.L.W.N., 21/9/18.
127. I.R. Phimister - "The "Spanish" Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and its impact on the Southern Rhodesian Mining Industry" in The Central African Journal of Medicine XIX July 1973, p.143.
128. S.L.W.N. 18/1/19. The figures vary and demographic surveys are needed in this respect.
129. S.L.W.N., 31/8/18 and 7/9/18.
130. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, Wilkinson to Walter Long 21/10/18.
131. *ibid*, Allan, "Interim Report" *op.cit.*
132. S.L.W.N., 28/9/18.
133. S.L.W.N., 7/9/18.
134. S.L.W.N., 21/9/18; S.L.W.N. 7/9/18.
135. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257 - Wilkinson to Walter Long, 21/10/18; Sierra Leone Medical Report 1918 (Sierra Leone Collection, F.B.C. Library)
136. Allan, "Interim Report", *op.cit.*
137. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18
138. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. No.167, M.P. P.11/1919 - Annual Medical Report on the Freetown Prison 1918; See also P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/22157; P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, Dr. W.A. Young, Medical Officer in charge of Laboratory- "Report on Influenza in the Prison."
139. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257 - Dr. C.H. Allan, Provincial Medical Officer to P.M.O. Dr. Tweedy, 27/9/18.
140. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.
141. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, Dr. W.F. Campbell, Medical Officer, Kissy to P.M.O. 27/9/18.
142. W.M.M.S. Correspondence (West Africa) "S.L. Odds 1914-1924," Annual Report 1918 (S.O.A.S).
143. S.L.W.N. 19/10/18; See also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No.176 D.C. Karene 25/1919, 3/4/19, Annual Report, Karene District, 1918 and P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/23343.
144. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. NO. 131, M.P. D.C. Railway 18/1919, Annual Report Railway District 1918. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/18879.
145. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. Conf. 13/3/19 - Annual Report, Sherbro District 1918.

146. P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43240, Annual Report Northern Sherbro, 1918.
147. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. No.164, M.P. D.C. Ronietta 11/1919, Annual Report, Ronietta District 1918 and P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/22154.
148. P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/26650, Annual Report Koinadugu District, 1918.
149. Allan - "Interim Report" op.cit.
150. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No.163, M.P. R.G.5/1919 - "Return of Births and Deaths and Still Births in the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone 1915-1918," Registrar General to Colonial Secretary 18/3/19.
151. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. Conf. No.24 M.P. 205/1918, Annual Report Medical and Sanitary Department 1917, Deputy Governor, W.B. Stanley to Secretary of State, 10/1/19; See also A.J.G. Wyse - The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History (C. Hurst and Co. 1989)
152. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Sherbro 84/1918, Addison to Colonial Secretary 28/11/18; See also S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 15/1909; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. M.P.'s 1311/23; 542/23; 728/24.
153. Poem cited in Leo. Spitzer - The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1890-1945 (University of London Press 1974) p.160
154. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, Wilkinson to Walter Long 21/10/18.
155. Allan, "Interim Report," op.cit.
156. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No.126 M.P. P.11/1919, Annual Report, Prison Department, 1918; Sierra Leone Gazette No.1780, 9/11/18.
157. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, C.H. Allan, Provincial Medical Officer to P.M.O. 27/9/18.
158. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No.302 M.P. Cus 94/19, Annual Trade Report on the Colony 1918.
159. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Agriculture 20/1918, Bradshaw, Roads Engineer to Colonial Secretary 20/9/18; 4/1/19; see also C.S.O. Agriculture 15/18; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Roads Engineer 13/1918; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Governor 19/1917; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. M.P. 798/1924; S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Confidential 4/1919.
160. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/13258, Annual Report Headquarter District 1918.
161. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl in S.L. No.132 M.P. Roads Engineer 8/1919 Annual Report Protectorate Roads Department 1918; P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/18880.

162. P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/26650, Annual Report Koinadugu District, 1918.
163. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Agriculture 12/1919 - Annual Report Department of Agriculture 1918; P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/26643; P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/60683 - Wilkinson - "The Food shortage."
164. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. No.164 M.P. D.C. Ronietta 11/1919 Annual Report Ronietta District 1918.
165. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Encl. in S.L. No.176, D.C. Karene 25/1919, Annual Report Karene District, 1918.
166. P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/37780 - Annual Trade Report on the Colony, 1918.
167. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/53257, Wilkinson to Walter Long 21/10/18.
168. S.L.W.N. 31/8/18.
169. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.
170. *ibid*; on this point also see A.J.G. Wyse, "The Dissolution of Freetown City Council in 1926: A Negative example of Political Apprenticeship in Colonial Sierra Leone" in Africa, 57 (4), 1987, p.1.
171. S.L.W.N., 14/9/18. For statistics on European deaths in 1918 see P.R.O. C.O. 267/397/56348 Annual General Report of the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone, 1921. Governor Slater to Secretary of State, 27/10/22. 6 non-military and 7 military personnel also died that year.
172. S.L.W.N., 21/9/18.
173. S.L.W.N., 28/9/18 and S.L.W.N., 25/9/18.
174. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/13260, Wilkinson to Milner, 4/2/19.
175. *ibid*, Major R.H. Cordner to Senior Medical Officer, "Interim Report on Anti-malarial Campaign 1918 - Military areas, 14/12/18.
176. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/13258, Annual Report Headquarter District, 1918.
177. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Medical 154/18, Milner to Wilkinson, S.L. No.201, 19/5/19.
178. S.L.W.N., 19/10/18.
179. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. Medical 154/18, R. Farrar to P.M.O. 7/7/19.
180. *ibid*, C.A. Allan, Acting P.M.O. to Colonial Secretary 25/6/19.
181. See S.L.N.A., Order-in-Council of 19/4/20; the order was to come into operation on 27th April, 1920.

182. S.L.N.A. Regulations No. 10 of 1920 - The Influenza (Prevention of Importation) Regulations 1920, made by the Governor in Council under Section 57 of the Public Health Ordinance 1905; see also Gazette 11/12/20.

183. P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/23342, Dr. W. Allan, Acting Senior Sanitary Inspector, "Second Interim Report on the Anti-Malaria Scheme" to the Secretary of State, 24/3/19.

184. P.R.O. C.O. 267/583/71848, Wilkinson to Milner, 1/12/19.

185. P.R.O. C.O. 267/583/71851, Address of His Excellency the Governor to members of the Legislative Council 3/12/19, On the occasion of the first reading of the Appropriation Ordinance No.7 of 1919.

186. See G. Shepperson and T. Price, Independent African (Edinburgh 1958) for the Chilembwe rising during this period.

187. S.L.W.N., 7/9/18.

188. ibid.

189. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.

190. W.M.M.S., Minutes of the Sierra Leone District Synod, 1st February to 19th February, 1915 (S.O.A.S.).

191. S.L.W.N. 28/9/18.

192. S.L.W.N. 5/10/18.

193. S.L.W.N. 14/9/18.

194. C.P. Groves suggests that the war was a serious setback to the growth of the Church in Africa; see C.P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa, Vol. IV (London 1958) p.17 in M.Louise Pirouet, "East African Christians and World War I," Journal of African History (J.A.H.) XIX, I, 1978, p.117.

195 105th Annual Report, W.M.M.S. pp.63-64 (S.O.A.S.).

196 ibid.p.69

197. ibid p.71; For the pact between the C.M.S. and the Methodists see Report on Proceedings of the C.M.S. For Africa and the East 1917-1918 p.19, (F.B.C. Library); 56th Annual Report, Sierra Leone Native Pastorate Auxiliary Association pp.29-32. (F.B.C. Library).

198. S.L.W.N. 14/9/8.

Chapter 7: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT 1

The outbreak of World War I was to have a differential impact on the fortunes of revenue in Colonial Sierra Leone. The steady pace of economic development that had characterised the period between 1900 and the first half of 1913¹ was significantly altered in 1914. Since the literature on the economic impact of World War I on African societies is very patchy² this chapter examines the Sierra Leone government's attempt to raise revenue in order to cushion the strains of war, the fortunes of local producers, their responses to the general global depression and the factors affecting trade in the districts in the period under review.

THE EVE OF WAR

Judged by the levels and sources of revenue, Sierra Leone was enjoying a sufficiently buoyant economy on the eve of war. This convinced the Comptroller of Customs to recommend the abolition of customs duties on edibles³ in 1913. Local trade networks were themselves enhanced by a successful trade between the dependency and French Guinea, Portuguese Guinea and Liberia.⁴ In many ways, 1913 is a valuable starting point for assessing the nature of economic activity during the war for despite dwindling returns from the port of Sherbro following official action against the activities of the Human Leopard Society, revenue from customs dues (£328,333) that year was the highest ever collected in the Colony.

Increased commercial prosperity in 1913 was the result of many factors. Notwithstanding restrictive legislation, receipts from spirit imports increased due to the large number of European residents and the growing demand for these beverages among the local population. Revenue from food imports soared chiefly because of the remission of taxation on all "articles of food." Indeed the phenomenal growth in revenue from the import sector was mainly a function of the number and tonnage of vessels which called at the various ports in 1913. Imports like clothing, boats, launches and lighters, iron and steel manufactures, building materials, carts and carriages, cement, cottons and hardware, perfumery, railway material and rolling stock, telegraphic materials, manufactured tobacco, woollen and worsted manufactures, were largely designed to meet the needs of Europeans, Syrians and foreign firms. As many Minute Papers for the year show, 1913 was characterised by enhanced industrial activity due to the need to promote communications in order to tap the rich resources of the palm belt. Importations of railway materials and rolling stock were for example, needed to prosecute the massive outlay in railway works such as the Rokel-Makeni and Makeni-Bauya extensions.

Because of the diversion of labour to rice farming and the unprecedented attractions of the wage economy which the Bauya railway extension was making possible, palm kernel exports declined in volume by 1,550 tons in 1913. There was however a large increase in value (£793,178 for 1912 and £920,943 for 1913) as prices on the European markets were the highest ever recorded (£22 per ton). For similar reasons, and in spite of

higher prices (£31) per gallon on the European market, palm oil exports declined in 1913. Despite these drawbacks, returns show that both products had increased in volume and value between 1901 and 1913. The grant of concessions to work mechanical mills and the rapid extension in railway building ensured that these principal exports contributed no less than £997,602 to revenue in 1913.

The trade in kola nuts, thanks to the Syrians and the high demand in French and Portuguese Guinea, Dakar and the Gambia and the expansion of railway works, was making positive contributions to overall revenue. Returns show an increase of 416 tons (valued at £142,883) in 1913 over the average exports (1,449 tons valued at £185,120) for the period 1908-1912. The trade in ginger, piassava, hides and rice may have declined due to poor prices, the prevalence of the barter system in Sulima, Mano Salija and Gene and the smaller shipments of rice from Mahela. The decline was also compounded by the attractions of the overland routes to French Guinea. These losses notwithstanding, the aggregate import and export trade increased the purchasing power of the population in 1913.⁵

Perhaps the most significant element in all this was the extent of Britain's participation in the overall trade of Sierra Leone. In 1913, she was responsible for 39.31% of the trade of the dependency (Germany 28.62%) But if Britain dominated the import trade, (taking 64% with Germany 11.70%) Germany had clearly established her dominance in the export sector between 1909 and 1913. In 1913, she took 47.49% of a

total export trade valued at £1,731,252. In 1909, the bulk of Sierra Leone's palm kernels went to Hamburg and in 1913 Germany took 43,016 tons of kernels valued at £83,038 with only 6,185 tons going to Britain.⁶ The significance of this summary would be seen in the subsequent dislocations caused to revenue following the expulsion of German trade. Because Germany enjoyed an advantage over Britain in possessing extensive mills for extracting the oil from the pericarp of the palm fruit, she was able to use kernel oil as animal fodder, in the manufacture of margarine, (and other butter substitutes) soap and other articles⁷.

Germany was also making significant strides in the import trade of Sierra Leone - monopolising the trade in cheaper varieties of cotton goods, hosiery, yarn and lace and flooding the market with bright and gaudy colours which "appealed to the native mind". A ready market was also found for German hats and caps in the Protectorate where towns and villages were opening up in the wake of railway construction. By 1913, German jewellery consisted of "multitudinous trifles" whose tinsel wore off after a short time. Hamburg itself was an important connecting link in the trade route from Scandinavia to West Africa and this helped Germany to capture the trade in matches.⁸ German commercial activity in Sierra Leone was prosecuted by five firms based in the Colony and Protectorate.⁹ So vigorous was the nature of German competition that the D.C. Northern Sherbro lamented the "lack of enterprise displayed" by English traders.¹⁰ By the eve of war, the Deutsche Kamerun Gesellschaft had extended its activities to Blama and Kenema. They were also erecting a

factory at Pendembu and were engaged in agriculture at Jamaica (Bonthe) with a coffee plantation extending well over 100 acres."¹¹

German rivalry was not only prosecuted in Sierra Leone. Their apparently hostile and near belligerent attitude displayed in matters of commerce in neighbouring Liberia and the spate of German applications flooding Monrovia for railway concessions in Grand Bassa and Sinoe Counties were by 1913, proving a source of worry to the British in Freetown.¹² By early 1914, the Deutsche-Liberian bank of A. Woermann had succeeded in taking over the Liberian government's bank account and the Germans were suspected of having fuelled the Liberian government's attempts to demonetise British silver coins in West Africa.¹³ With repeated suspicions that Germany had secured Liberia and the perennial problem of attempts to siphon-off labourers from Sierra Leone through Liberia to Sao Thome, Principe, Fernando Po and South West Africa,¹⁴ Sierra Leone's foreign relations became entangled in the quest for commercial supremacy in Liberia by two great powers on the eve of war.

However, the geographical and strategic position of the port of Freetown ensured a successful shipping trade in 1913. The general prosperity over a five year period (1909-1913, except in 1910 when yellow fever threatened the dependency) was marked by significant increases in tonnage for vessels which entered and left Freetown, the sub ports of Sherbro, Mano Salija, Sulima, Mahela and Gene.

Up to August 1914, shipping activity in Sierra Leone was dominated by the two leading maritime nations of the world with Britain being responsible for 70.03% and Germany 27.57% of a total tonnage of 1,460,197 which entered the port by steam vessels. The available evidence shows that Commercial activity in 1913 was far more prosperous than that for 1912 due to a satisfactory harvest, a sustained demand on the European markets for the exports of the Colony, the extension of railway and public works, the opening up of the interior and the demand for Western imports by the large number of European and Asiatic residents in the Colony and Protectorate.

Once war erupted, the gains made began to be checked; the decline in the volume of palm products was aggravated by the diversion of labour from palm cutting to rice farming and on the Makeni-Bauya railway extension, and by the lack of machinery to separate the shell from the kernel. Labour supply was rendered erratic by official attempts to curb the activities of the Human Leopard Society in Northern Sherbro. By the end of 1913 therefore, decline had begun to set in and the war was to make it difficult to sustain the rate of growth achieved in 1913, whilst hostilities lasted.¹⁵ By 10th August therefore, the Colonial Secretary was urging all Heads of Departments to effect economies in the administration of the votes under their control¹⁶ for even before the outbreak, the process of mobilisation had begun to take its toll on revenue.

As war became imminent, it also became clear that

government's balance (£85,000) in its current account in the Bank of British West Africa would be insufficient to meet exceptional demands. This sum was therefore to be released as and when necessary for military requirement;¹⁷ but because the depression in local commerce made it impossible to balance revenue and expenditure in the estimates for 1915, public works and trade schools had to be temporarily suspended.¹⁸

Apart from restrictive legislation on sugar exports from the United Kingdom to West Africa in September 1914,¹⁹ the prohibition of trade with Germany had significant consequences for revenue. Britain's inability to accommodate the Colony's produce left merchants with large quantities of rice, pepper, "beni" (sesame) seed and kola which they could not sell.²⁰ It was in the export sector that Sierra Leone was most vulnerable for the lack of crushing mills in the United Kingdom, and the shortage of shipping crippled the export trade in palm kernels.²¹

The initial shocks were to be felt most acutely in the districts. Very little trade in palm kernels was conducted in Sherbro due to poor prices and even when merchants increased the price per bushel by 50% it was to help the producer purchase "trade goods" and was not in response to the demand for kernels in Europe.²² By September 1914 trade had lost its usual vitality in the Port Loko sub district of Karene. The depredations of the men of the W.A.R., high prices for tobacco and salt in Freetown and the fear and commotion which accompanied orders to mobilise affected trade

considerably. As in Sherbro, producers were forced to hold back their produce in anticipation of better prices.

It was largely rumours associated with civil commotion that compelled traders to close their shops in Railway district in September 1914. The result was a massive shortage of salt and tobacco. Apart from declining prices in palm oil and palm kernels, Koinadugu was the least affected in the initial days of war²³ but to the south in Northern Sherbro the precedents for the manipulative tactics of combines were being established as some foreign firms exploited producers by reducing prices by 120%. By September, they were paying 4/ a bushel for kernels and 3/ per can for oil (as against 10/ and 9/ respectively for the corresponding period in 1912) at a time when prices on the Liverpool market were £16.10 and £27.10 per ton for kernels and oil respectively.

Constrained by increased freight charges, merchants were forced to lock up their capital for long periods thereby dislocating trade and business. Thus in Ronietta, the C.F.A.O. at Makump, Sheard and Harrop at Mabum and Stinus and Depuichaffray were paying very low prices to producers.²⁴

GOVERNMENT AND THE ECONOMY

The pattern of economic decline which began towards the end of 1913, was to magnify the problems faced by the colonial government in its attempts to balance revenue and expenditure during the war. By December 1914, the estimate for the year was £153,146 less than the original (£448,268) due to a drop

in railway and customs receipts. Expenditure itself had to be revised upwards (from £689,168 to £710,928) despite some savings in recurrent and extraordinary public works and provincial administration.

The estimated revenue for 1915 (£490,647) was £12,379 higher than that for 1914 but the uncertainty over the duration of the war made it difficult to balance revenue and expenditure. Expenditure thus had to be reduced by a freeze on employment and by suspending some public works.

The outlook for 1915 was not entirely gloomy as certain factors helped the government cushion the initial shocks of war. The estimated expenditure for 1915 (£600,759) was £110,169 less than that for 1914 and by the outbreak of war, Sierra Leone had accumulated a substantial surplus on which the Colony could make "a further heavy call in 1915." Above all, savings had been made in many areas like the public debt (£27,956) the railway (£70,702) and on extraordinary public works (£19,375). Greater lengths of line had been opened for traffic by 1914 coupled with a heavy outlay on locomotives and rolling stock. This made it possible for huge savings in expenditure on the railway in the estimates for 1915. The Governor was further urged to fill only those appointments for African staff that were actually needed. Apart from a few "hiccups" therefore, the war did not materially affect new works for some preliminary experimental work was planned for roads and drains in Freetown and £12,000 was allocated for a new school at Kenema²⁵ in the estimates for 1915.

The only source of worry came from the rather disappointing

returns from trade. By the start of 1915, exports - the main bastion of the economy - unlike imports, were stationary. To avoid borrowing through the Crown Agents expenditure had to be drastically reduced; the Colonial Office even contemplated direct taxation on European officials and additional duties.²⁶

The opening days of 1915 however brought fresh hopes for recovery when overall revenue for 1914 exceeded that of the revised estimates by £51,000.²⁷ But the vitality shown by the palm kernel trade, increased railway receipts and the improvements in imports were insufficient to justify Merewether's expectation that the estimated revenue for 1915 would be realised as the average monthly revenue since August 1914 (£23,687) was not improving significantly.²⁸ It was therefore considered necessary to raise taxes on tobacco (from 5 to 8d per lb), cigars and cigarettes (from 2/to 3/ per lb) and beer (from 6d to 9d per lb)²⁹ to enable Sierra Leone to undertake public works without troubling the Crown Agents.

The decline, was not solely due to the war. Throughout 1914, dwindling receipts from the diverse sources of revenue affected import duties considerably and as prices (on the European market) of the principal products of the dependency fell, coupled with a reduction in the peoples' purchasing power, merchants had to reduce imports until their accumulated stocks were sold. The general decline in import duties was also due to the loss of the trade with Germany (especially that in spirits) and other European countries the

value of which approximated £175,118 in 1913. By 1915, this deficiency had still not been adjusted for although the decline was mitigated by increased imports of coal and lumber in 1914, imports of manufactured articles like boats launches, cotton goods and perfumery dropped by 21.3%³⁰

Although Freetown was a major distributing centre on the west coast, 1914 was a bad year for Sierra Leone's export trade. There was a marked depression in food, drink, tobacco, raw materials, manufactured and non-manufactured articles and many other exports of the dependency. In addition, the ban on some manufactured articles led to a decline in the export of boats, launches, lighters and telegraphic materials so that by June 1915, the initial optimism shown by the Governor over the financial position had begun to wane. Only £35,089.5.0. remained at the disposal of government for general purposes. It was however the expenditure on harbour works and the Makeni-Baga railway extension in 1914, coupled with the various temporary advances made for war purposes that forced Merewether to consider effecting economies. The duty on spirits was therefore raised from 6/3d to 7/6d a gallon and a surtax of 25% imposed on all duty payable.³¹

By July however, the meagre balance of loan funds available for 1916 and the aggregate expenditure on the Cameroon and Togoland expeditionary forces further crippled the fortunes of revenue and forced the Colonial government to abandon work on the export wharf.³²

Against this background, it was difficult to meet the

probable deficit of £40,000 for 1916. The revenue for 1915 had fallen short of the estimates by £19,549 whilst receipts from the railway, licences and internal revenue and the Post Office Savings Bank declined considerably. In these circumstances the Colonial Office agreed that duty on unmanufactured tobacco be increased from 8d to 1/ a pound and that the duty on foodstuffs be reimposed and increased from 12 1/2% to 15% ad valorem. The estimated expenditure for 1916 was also made the lowest (£524,116) since 1911.

Such drastic economies may have yielded modest gains in 1915 but £90,000 of Sierra Leone's assets were still locked up in stores and the Colony had no liquid assets.³³ Matters were not helped by extortionate chiefs whose oppression of their people led many sub-chiefs to stop paying the house tax.³⁴ Total revenue for 1915 (£504,425) thus showed the first recorded decline since 1911. Since August 1914 there was a marked decline in the capital held by the Colony and loans given by the imperial government depressed the value of gilt-edged securities.³⁵

Thanks to higher customs tariffs, government secured an enhanced revenue in 1916 (£551,106). Through a policy of rigorous retrenchment expenditure was further reduced by £13,831 and the revenue exceeded expenditure by £18,166. To these factors should be added the increased value of imported goods which were liable to ad valorem duties. Whilst the mercantile trade of Mano Salija and Sulima remained dormant, import duties continued to soar at the port of Sherbro but the closure of the German market continued to exercise a

negative influence on the spirit trade.

The revenue from exports for 1916 may have dwindled slightly compared with 1915 but it is worth noting that of a total value of £1,223,544 derived from exports, the produce and manufactures of the Colony yielded £1,101,846. Determined to sustain the modest gains made, the government proceeded to revise import duties and the Customs Duties (Amendment) Ordinance of 1915. Many Orders-in-Council passed on 10th March and 21st July 1916 increased specific duties, imposed about 50% extra duty on ale, cigars and tobacco and about 25% on spirits and other articles. The Customs Duties (Further) Amendment Ordinance (No 17 of 1915) abolished the surtax of 25%, increased the ad valorem duty from 10% to 15% and imposed duties on foodstuffs (except food on ice) bread and flour.³⁶

The results were not immediately realised for comparative figures for 1917 (£546,449) show a drop of £4,657 in revenue. A decline in receipts from customs, the house tax, spirit licences from the Protectorate and balances owed by the City Council for expenditure incurred by the government on water works extension, all accounted for this drop.

The situation was further worsened by the continued depreciation in the capital value of the securities held by the Colony so that any immediate revival was doubtful. Despite increases in ad valorem duties, the total dues from customs (£263,585) declined by £14,959. The fall in spirit imports, tobacco, kerosene and sugar also reduced specific

duties and matters were little mitigated by the irregularity of trade at the ports of Sherbro and York. Whilst duties on commercial imports for 1917 (£1,288,499) exceeded those for 1916 (£1,058,333) the closure of all public works ensured a decrease of £33,081 in the duties collected from government imports.

Only in the export sector was the story materially different for out of a total value of £1,497,995 contributed by the export trade, £1,276,434 came from the higher prices for palm oil, palm kernels and kola, the chief domestic exports of Sierra Leone.³⁷ The problems encountered by the government led the Governor to revive the question of public works again in March 1917 in a bid to secure more revenue for the Colony. As progress depended on palm oil and palm kernel exports handled by the railway and on customs duties, Wilkinson was convinced that more income could be secured by opening up new sources of supply through railway extension and the building of roads and wharves.³⁸ But the Colonial Office, preoccupied with the exigencies of the war in East Africa ignored the views of the Governor.

In October 1917, government was caught up in financial complications regarding the rapid rise in the price of coal. Because budgetary provisions for fuel for 1917 had to be increased by £20,000 and by £30,508 for 1918, the question of increasing railway rates came up again as "transportation costs dominated everything in the Protectorate."

Whilst Wilkinson apprehended certain dangers in increasing

transport rates on palm products, the Executive Council decided that a better solution to the temporary difficulty created by the high price of coal was to "throw the burden" on all exports. Rates for kernels on the railway were therefore fixed at 10/ a ton, 1/2d a gallon on palm oil and 1/2d a pound on kola as export duties - all to come into force on 1st January 1918. Overall railway rates were also increased by 10% in the hope that all these measures would yield £40,408 in 1918 - more than enough to cover the cost of coal. Positive as these moves were, it was obvious that the burden of these rates would fall on local producers who also had to contend with the high costs of imported articles.³⁹

As Wilkinson was soon to realise, increased railway rates and the introduction of export duties were not enough to address the financial problem faced by the dependency especially in 1918 when even greater demands were made on an already insufficient revenue. The price allowed by the Food Controller in London for Sierra Leone's kernels was too low to stimulate production and this had an adverse effect on railway receipts, import and export duties. The revised estimate of revenue for 1917 was thus not realised while the demands for increased expenditure became more urgent.

Medical authorities were asking for better sanitation while agricultural advisers urged the importance of growing more foodstuffs. Forestry experts were advocating additional expenditure on conservancy and the approved scheme for the wharf at Cline Town and for "roading and draining Freetown" had proved too costly. Apart from overcrowding in Freetown's

jail, the question of its enlargement was bound to entail more expenses. The need for a better police force could only be met by the provision of more pay, more men, police stations and barracks and that meant further expenditure.

More money was also needed to address the questions of infant mortality, pay war bonuses, prize court allowances and other personal claims. Yet in spite of extra taxation the revenue was only likely to cover "such bare annually recurrent votes as cannot possibly be avoided." Placed in a very unenviable position, Wilkinson deprecated the practice of referring problems to technical advisers who were oblivious to the country's limited resources or the claims of other departments. The Governor found it difficult "to express without presumption," an unfavourable opinion of a scheme "backed by the authority of some great name".⁴⁰

Many factors therefore combined to produce a gloomy outlook for 1919. Expenditure was expected to rise further due to the need to fill vacant appointments and obtain material for works. Other likely sources of expenditure were the requirement to pay extra overtime to customs officers due to more shipping activity, payments for provisions in the medical department, payment as compensation for "Cameroons kit," increased allowance to troops in lieu of customs rebate and many more.⁴¹

These drawbacks notwithstanding, the evidence shows that 1918 was the best year on record from the standpoint of revenue; government's position was considerably bolstered by increased

receipts from ad valorem duties, customs fees and shed rents. In the main, it was enhanced prices for all classes of imported goods rather than any increases in the volume of imports which helped to swell ad valorem duties.

By 1918, America and South Africa were sending provisions to Freetown and this increased revenue, but such gains were not reciprocated by receipts from specific duties (which fell from £165,263 in 1917 to £145,510 in 1918) chiefly because of lesser imports of unmanufactured tobacco and lumber. The revenue was however boosted by gains from kerosene, salt, spirits and sugar imports. The government's determination to forestall a likely shortage had led to importations of sugar from South Africa and Mauritius apart from Britain and the U.S.A. at a time when private enterprise failed to obtain supplies.

As will be shown later, the aggregate duty (£31,954) from exports dropped significantly due to the fluctuations in the shipment of palm produce. Fewer vessels called at the port of Sherbro in 1918 and this accounted for a drop of £12,411 comprising entirely of specific duty. By this time trade at the sub-ports of Mano Salija and Sulima remained dormant and Gene had been reduced to a smuggling preventive station. The fortunes of revenue were not helped by the decline in receipts from port, harbour and lighthouse dues due to the concession granted by the Admiralty to local producers to ship produce in vessels exempt from such duties.

By dint of fortuitous circumstances however, government was

well placed to benefit from customs duties. 1918 was a particularly busy year for shipping when customs staff were stretched to their utmost to ensure the quick despatch of steamers. The "flu" epidemic was also a blessing in disguise for during this period, extra fees had to be paid for work performed at places other than customs premises. Furthermore, labour shortages at the King's Shed, caused a delay of goods which subsequently became liable to higher rents. As packages were numerous and their contents widely varied, the task of clearance and delivery was held up and this boosted rent receipts.⁴²

The gains derived from customs duties were in some ways affected by government's obligation to pay drawbacks and refund duty totalling £4,703. Large supplies of stores and materials to H.M. forces were also furnished free of customs duty whilst the provision of proof of landing of goods at West African ports which were less favoured with steamship service, secured to the exporter 95% of the import duty. Significant refunds were also made to importers on account of kerosene short-landed or for damages to packages and contents lost by leakage.

These were clearly abnormal times and it was hoped that the resumption of normal shipping would keep such payments down. In addition to these losses, the restriction on spirit imports from Britain continued to contract the volume of imports into the Colony. Perhaps the most significant development in this regard was the improved spirit trade with America. American rum appears to have met the needs of the

local market and by 1918, she was furnishing brandy, whisky, perfumed and sweetened spirits. This development notwithstanding, £40,144 (4.27% of the entire inward trade for 1918) was collected as duty from the imports of spirits - a decrease of £49,532 when compared with the figures for 1914 (£89,676)⁴³

TRADE AND COMMERCE IN 1918

Some analysis of trade and commerce in 1918 is instructive for an appreciation of the revenue situation. The picture is one of vacillating fortunes. The total dues collected from imports for the year (£1,680,336) increased by £347,584 compared with that for 1917 (£1,332,752) and those from re-exports (£327,600) advanced by £106,039 in value. Unlike these categories, the value derived from the export of the produce and manufacture of the Colony (£1,189,271) dropped by £87,163 compared with the gains made in 1917 (£1,276,434)

On the other hand, the government enjoyed buoyant receipts from re-exports because the port of Freetown was more favoured with steamships than any other on the west coast. Freetown thus acted as a distributing centre for merchandise to other West African colonies. In this way much business accrued to the merchants of Sierra Leone with significant results for local trade.

A breakdown of the various categories of imports in 1918 would show that food, drink and tobacco yielded £412,086 (compared with £354,488 and £320,288 for 1913 and 1917 respectively) raw materials and articles mainly

unmanufactured, £203,821 (as opposed to £103,680 for 1913 and £20,488 for 1917) and articles wholly or mainly manufactured, £1,064,406 (compared with £979,449 for 1913 and £807,556 for 1917). The Comptroller of Customs argued that values had been so inflated in 1918 "that comparative figures of the import trade have largely lost their significance."⁴⁴ Indeed such massive increases in the import of luxuries (such as drink and tobacco) and manufactured goods such as cutlery, cotton piece goods, hosiery, hats, drugs, boots, motor cars, matches, pipes and soap etc which catered for the material comforts of the population showed that "business was far from moribund".

In 1918, the purchasing power of the population was reported to be "virile" in spite of the heavy drain of excessive freights and high prices of imported goods. Yet much of this purchasing power derived from conditions not normally available in peace time. The establishment of a naval base at Freetown and the many activities pursued under the aegis of the navy brought more money into circulation. For the same reasons, the total value derived from commercial imports (£1,652,184) increased by £363,685 over that for 1917 (£1,288,499) and by £360,202 over that for 1913 (£1,291,982).

Considering the poor performance of palm kernel and palm oil in the export sector, the shrinkage (as will be shown later) was therefore more than counterbalanced by the benefits derived from the peculiar conditions induced by the war.

Despite the very modest performances in the export sector, in

1918, gains totalling £69,280 were made from food exports. Again, the government was particularly fortunate because of extensive shipment of kola, ginger and pepper, all of which yielded a revenue of £93,001. Exports of cured fish, and sugar coupled with re-exports of rice also added to these increases but while the revenue derived from the exports of flour, cattle and "native" rice fell, the temporary dislocation of the ordinary system of coast trading ironically led to increases in some categories of drink and tobacco such as mineral waters, ales and wines and unmanufactured tobacco.

Increases in the revenue derived from exports of coal (£66,617) rubber (£16,353) piassava (£6,765) and lumber (£4,904) also helped to mitigate the loss in revenue from the trade in palm kernels (£159,371) hides, ivory and beeswax.⁴⁵ 1918 was therefore a busy one for Freetown as far as the export trade of the dependency was concerned. Thus in terms of the export of manufactured articles, the extended shipment of cotton, boats and launches, bags and coopers stores helped the revenue considerably; so that the aggregate value of commercial exports (£1,516,871) exceeded that for 1917 (£1,497,995) by £18,876.⁴⁶

On the whole, various legal instruments, ordinances and orders-in-council passed during the year, were to shape the character of the import and export trade as well as the revenue of the dependency. A few examples are instructive. From 10th July 1918, revised duties at the rate of 10d per 100 were to be imposed on cigarettes, whilst Ordinance 24

revised the rate for rent at 1/ monthly for each receptacle of palm oil and 1d for each package of kernels deposited on the west end of government Wharf. Designed to come into effect on 1st February 1919, Ordinance 25 revised rates for the storage of imported goods in government's sheds and warehouses and fixed special rates for goods in transit.⁴⁷ In terms of value alone therefore, 1918 was statistically the best on record since 1914.

Perhaps the only significant drawback was the decline in the principal exports of the Colony which proved a serious set back for overall revenue. Such difficulties were accentuated by the high prices of basic commodities (whether imported or of local production) and the influenza epidemic which exercised a baneful influence on production, stifled trade and made it difficult for the Comptroller of Customs to forecast the trend of commerce in 1919.⁴⁸

Confronted with a gloomy outlook for 1919, the Governor was forced to address the question of dwindling revenues whilst fulminating against the practice of recruiting "more white officers," at "very high rates of pay even though there were equally qualified native personnel." The estimated revenue for 1919 (£581,442) was barely sufficient to meet the recurrent expenditure fixed at £375,293. New ventures such as the need to promote forestry, improving the police force and taking precautions against fly-borne diseases in the prison and the need for a new hospital for the W.A.F.F. at Daru, were all making demands on revenue. In addition, many Europeans (probably missionaries influenced by the temperance

movement) were urging the expediency of stopping the sale of spirits, this at an obvious revenue sacrifice of £50,000 a year.

Continued indirect taxation was no longer a solution for it fell heavily on the poor, whose average earnings was 9d a day. Wilkinson, (whose fondness for writing copious despatches on expert issues frequently infuriated the Colonial Office) argued that the best way of effecting savings was to stop recruiting more and more white officers, because whatever war time gains had been made in 1918, were siphoned-off by costly administrative expenditure.⁴⁹

Desperate to effect economy, the Governor suggested the appointment of a trained sanitary officer for each of the 204 chiefdoms, the construction of 700 miles of road, the appointment of a well trained school teacher and agricultural instructor for each chiefdom in order to obviate the supposedly wasteful methods of agriculture. Wilkinson argued that it was "not the poverty of Sierra Leone that stands in the way of progress" but lack of coordination and "a sense of proportion." Thus Njala Training School was to be opened in a few months and 300 miles of road constructed in 1919. Yet however well meaning the Governor was, he lamented the fact that he had "no real...control over the revenue."

A significant consequence of the shortfall in revenue was that it highlighted all the dangers associated with a mono-crop economy. Exports were therefore to be diversified away from palm produce. This, Wilkinson argued could be achieved

by cheapening communications and developing other industries such as rubber, cocoa, coco-nuts, piassava and oil producing plants other than the palm. Established patterns of agriculture were also to be reviewed in order to generate marketable quantities of produce which would attract buyers. The Governor was confident that his plan would entail expenditure initially and "reimbursement afterwards."⁵⁰ The need for diversification was all the more urgent for even the future of the palm was threatened. The abolition of the spirit trade with Germany and Holland led many people in the Protectorate to start tapping the palm tree for palm wine to meet their alcoholic demands.

In the aftermath of the war, the need to continue the prohibition of the trade in the Colony and Protectorate, was still a matter for concern. Were this to happen it would mean a significant loss of revenue of about £130,000 calculated on a pre-war basis apart from a further loss of revenue hitherto derived from spirit licences. It was also obvious that the high prices of British spirits made it unlikely that they would ever be purchased in sufficient quantity to counterbalance the deficiency caused by the cessation of the trade.⁵¹ It was in this context that Wilkinson was justifying his roads policy so vigorously in February 1919. Conscious of the decline in produce, the Governor argued that besides improving trade, cheaper transportation would release many men from the work of transport for that of direct production.⁵²

Another obvious liability to be addressed was the customs

preventive station at Gene on the Liberian frontier. Established on 10th April 1913 by agreement between the U.K. and the Liberian government, it was hoped that the navigable Mano river, would serve as a major trade waterway. By 1918 however, geographical barriers, lack of proper supervision of the station and the abuses perpetrated by "boatmen" (guards) of the preventive service especially in Makpli and Sore Chiefdoms (Pujehun District) were all defeating the purpose for which the Anglo-Liberian Agreement was signed - i.e. raising revenue. Very few traders presented themselves at the various stations and at Gene to pay duty. So that in 1916 for example, the cost of running the station amounted to £900 whilst the revenue collected was only £16.⁵³

By May 1919, the financial position of the Colony was regarded as "very bad". Even after the peace treaty to end the war, heavy charges still had to be met due to war bonus payments which were bound to incur an excess expenditure of £122,916 in 1919. Further, the loss of import duty on trade spirits was estimated at £23,000 and the loss of revenue from spirit licences at £1,600. It was also assumed that by 1920, the revenue from spirit licences would decline by 25% and will cease entirely from the Protectorate. By 7th May 1919, the total amount of supplementary expenditure was put at £5,743, the chief items here being Njala Training College, the acquisition of land for public purposes for the railway, forestry and a foundry at Cline Town. The value of the Colony's investment also continued to depreciate - the estimated excess of assets over liability being £104,453.⁵⁴

In order to raise more revenue the government (in July 1919) increased import duties on beer (to 1/ a gallon) gun powder (to 6d per lb) spirits (at 10/ a gallon) unmanufactured tobacco (to 1/3d per lb) manufactured tobacco (to 5/ per lb) and on cigars and cigarettes (at 5/ per lb). Together with the export duties on palm oil and palm kernels, these increases were expected to yield about £76,000 per annum.⁵⁵ But the need to meet war bonus expenses and the heavy financial outlay required to suppress the riots of 1919 complicated the financial position of the government even further. Proposals for more increases in railway rates for passengers, fees for telegrams (at 1/ per 72 words) and an import duty of 10/ per ton on salt were therefore made in the hope that all would yield approximately £20,000 annually.⁵⁶

The growing list of increases in taxation which punctuated government's attempts to redress the imbalances between revenue and expenditure however did little to ameliorate the situation. The revenue for 1920 was estimated at £757,357 (as against £591,442 for 1919) but the increased cost of materials and the need to replace worn-out rolling stock on the railway made it impossible to fix the expenditure at less than £763,289. Not even Wilkinson's proposals for substantial increases in spirit duties and for making the City Council more responsible for sanitation and street maintenance could break the stalemate. As the Governor argued, "the weak point in the Colony's finance was due to the fact that taxation fell exclusively on the native producer who is voiceless" and is "the poorest member of the community."⁵⁷

TRADE IN WARTIME SIERRA LEONE

As is evident from government's efforts to secure revenue the difficulties encountered were partly a function of the strains induced by the war. In Sierra Leone, internal and external factors conditioned trade and helped to shape local responses to the crisis. The story of commercial activity between 1914 and 1918 was essentially one of mixed fortunes. Conditions preceding the war helped some districts to absorb the initial shocks. Koinadugu for example entered the war with a largely increased revenue and the massive increases in store and hawkers' licences were clearly due to the march of the railway. Though groundnut cultivation was affected by a fungoid disease in 1914, government's timely intervention ensured the continuation of a small local market in the district.⁵⁸

For a district reputed to have the finest cattle in the Protectorate, 1915 was marked by a considerable lull in the cattle trade due to the outbreak of disease (pleuropneumonia) among the herds, but these "abnormal conditions" did not affect overall trade in Koinadugu. So successful was Captain Stanley's experiment in groundnut cultivation in Yalunka country that one chief harvested 50 bushels that year.⁵⁹ But the freeze on railway construction was to have serious consequences for trade in Koinadugu in 1916, when receipts from store and hawker's licences fell significantly. Conditions were however mitigated by the introduction of European commercial activities at Kabinkolo and Kamabai. It must be said however that Koinadugu's contribution to the

overall trade of the Colony (apart from the produce - rice, palm kernels, hides, kola and locust beans- which managed to find its way to the railway through the Bauya extension in Ronietta and Karene) had not hitherto been materially significant,⁶⁰ and traders had to await the harvest of 1917 for trade to be revived once more.⁶¹

Commercial activity was however boosted in 1918 through the presence of two European traders (a lease having been granted to Monsieur J M Billieres) in Kamabai which developed slowly as a trading centre, even attracting produce from the palm bearing areas of Karene.⁶²

Perhaps the Railway District provides the best example of the differential impact of the war on local trade. With headquarters at Kenema the district then spanned an area of about 7,000 square miles. The railway line which traversed it from east to west, from a point 120 miles from Freetown up to Pendembu, intensified local trade with significant consequences for revenue in 1914. But the vibrant trade to which the railway was opening up the district was fraught with serious drawbacks. Apart from widespread "petty larceny," the credit system (prosecuted by Syrians and Krios) which constituted the lynchpin of trade in the district, led to many summonses and "distress warrants" being taken out as each party tried to outdo the other.

In other ways, the spread of trade and education, Syrians and Krios, all tended to be disruptive of traditional authority for many of the local people who came to acquire "a smattering of English" plus a store licence began disobeying

their chiefs' and even refused to attend the latter's courts. The growth of trade also undermined local industry through the spread of imported cotton goods, spirits, building materials and hardware. By 1914 only a few people were engaged in the manufacture of "native cloth" in the district. These drawbacks apart, the trade in kola nuts flourished in 1914 and was not subject to the same disruptive influences as that in palm kernels.

In general, trade drew its impetus from a thriving market at Bauya (near the French Guinea border of Kissi) and from the massive improvements in communications. Three first class roads (Blama-Boajibu, Hanga-Lago and Bo-Tikonko) in the district acted as feeders to the railway and were used for wheeled traffic to carry produce in hand-carts.⁶³

The general depression of 1915 however penetrated every interstice of economic activity in the Railway district. Overall revenue dropped significantly, forcing traders to cut down on expensive luxuries such as spirit licences "which swallowed nearly all their profits." Revenue derived from spirit and hawkers' licences also declined and as receipts from Railway Open Lines fell, traders were deprived of spare cash "which they normally took back to their villages..." Nonetheless, the blessings of communications in the district helped to revive the vigorous trade networks with the French Kissis in November thanks to the completion of the road from Pendembu to Kailahun. The depression however did not deter wartime abuses and many traders continued to cheat consumers "by the use of some measure" other than the imperial bushel.⁶⁴

While the depression persisted elsewhere, Railway District continued to show signs of prosperity in 1916. Increased revenue provided proof of prosperity and as petty trading expanded, small shopkeepers took out yearly store licences and abandoned the practice of store trading as a speculation. These factors gave an added fillip to the kola trade which in turn drew its impetus from improved communications - particularly down the branch line from Rosanda and Makeni. At every station on the line (except Baoma) trade settlements (dominated by Syrians, Europeans and Krios) sprang up especially at Bo, Blama, Kenema, Segbwema and Pendembu which were also assuming the status of townships.⁶⁵

The prosperity of 1916 was to characterise trade in the district in 1917 and further increases in revenue derived from store and hawkers' licences were clearly indicative of vibrant commercial activity. Again the triggers came from the high prices of kola which tempted many traders to invest in the commodity. An increased demand for kola, scanty supplies coupled with rain storms which prevented the fruit from setting freely all combined to force the price of kola up.⁶⁶ The influenza epidemic of 1918 however had serious consequences for trade. During the year high prices of imported goods precluded people with limited capital from purchasing goods. Not even the use of motor lorries (though not widespread but used especially by Syrians on the Bo-Mandu and Bo-Tikonko road) for carrying produce could help to abate the decline in revenue from store and hawkers' licences.⁶⁷

To the south west in Sherbro, traders were particularly well

placed to benefit from the disruptive influences of the war and its ironically positive impact on the piassava trade in 1914. Enhanced prices for this commodity on the European market consequent on the high demand for army brooms in 1914, gave the trade a new vitality. It was also hoped that the pulp, hitherto considered as mere waste would fetch between £6 and £8 per ton on the European market whilst also serving as a coir substitute; but the apparently languishing rubber industry received further shocks with the outbreak of war.⁶⁸

In a district where the Jong, Bagru and Kittam river systems were navigable for produce carrying crafts, the ban on German shipping was particularly harmful to trade in Sherbro in 1915 when some £50,000 worth of produce was left lying at the port awaiting shipment. During the rains, the problem became so acute that the revenue dropped considerably.⁶⁹ The shortage of shipping space which persisted in 1916 was however not sufficient to deter traders. That year schooners and a motor lighter carried produce worth £40,970 to Freetown; even the firms continued to buy and sell produce. The indications of a successful trade can be gleaned from the value of exports sent by steamers to Europe and the value of the stock awaiting shipment. The depression in the spirit trade was accompanied by a corresponding drop in the crime rate, but the trade in dried fish was badly hindered by cattle disease in Karene which prevented the exchange of dried fish for cattle.⁷⁰

For the first time since the outbreak of war, the port of Sherbro was cleared of produce in 1917. This was so because

Sherbro was nearer to the U.K. than any other port down the coast and because the mercantile shipping communities were willing to turn "ships round with the utmost expedition." The only drawbacks were the low prices paid at the beginning of the year; this diverted to the railway a quantity of produce that would otherwise have been exported from the port. The recruitment of many able bodied men into the ranks of the Carrier Corps also affected the output and prices of produce. Less produce was gathered in Sherbro in 1917 and insufficient attention was paid to its preparation. But if disease continued to deplete the cattle herds, the trade in cocoa received a boost thanks to the active purchases made by the C.F.A.O.⁷¹

1918 was however a particularly bad year for trade in Sherbro; that year, fewer steamers called at the port and the loss of specific duty due to the decreased importation of tobacco and spirits had serious repercussions for overall revenue (£29,904) which dropped by £6,776/19/7 compared with that for 1917. Palm oil, palm kernel and piassava exports also suffered badly and produce that would otherwise have been shipped from the port was sent to Freetown.⁷²

War time trade in Northern Sherbro exhibited the mixed fortunes observed elsewhere. The very high rates exacted for spirit and hawkers' licences taken out in 1914 helped the revenue situation immensely but the suspension of the Woermann Line service which had hitherto catered for kernel exports and the demands made on the merchant fleet in the North Atlantic denied the district the normal facilities for

shipment. Customs revenue from the four ports of entry - Bonthe, Sulima, Mano Salija and Gene - therefore fell. Merchants faced grave risks and could not offer attractive prices to producers nor could they supply consumers' demands after 4th August 1914.⁷³

The same factors governed trade in 1915 and much of the produce hitherto sent to Mano Salija and Sulima were diverted to Liberia with serious consequences for revenue.⁷⁴ The depression caused by the war was however to generate local initiatives in 1916. That year thousands of fishermen - a hardy, prosperous and independent community - began fishing in the hitherto uncharted creeks in the district. The vast quantity of salt and fresh water fish caught in cast nets found a ready market all over the Protectorate.

Another factor which helped to revive trade was the development of the road system. An excellent third class road with good bridges, embankments and culverts, constructed along the Mano-Pujehun Telegraph line helped to transport produce; so did the remarkable system of waterways (south of the district) which induced many Europeans to open factories there. The chiefs also planned to clear the small channel of the Small Bum or Bey river which was formerly a short route to Sumbuya, a trade centre in the Railway district. The result was an added fillip to the trade in kola and palm kernels in 1916.⁷⁵

The prosperity enjoyed in Northern Sherbro in 1916 set the stage for a vigorous trade the following year when very high

prices revived the piassava industry. At £20 a ton, piassava paid the producer quite as much as kernels and apart from kola nut and the cocoa market, the energies of many people were diverted to the lucrative industry in dried fish. The only threat to the cocoa industry was the low prices offered for the beans and the reluctance of many firms to buy though the C.F.A.O. came to the rescue at Mopalma and Pujehun.

By 1917 many people in Northern Sherbro had come to regard cattle as a good investment; increased demands for beef at Bonthe, along the railway line and at various trading centres in the district (and because the cattle trade had been prohibited in French Guinea) generated higher prices for cattle.⁷⁶ The tale of relative prosperity was however halted in 1918 when influenza allied with trade depression to cause a decline in receipts from store and hawkers' licences. In 1913, there was more than ten times the number of spirit shops than in 1918. Worse still the fall in the spirit trade was not balanced by any improvements in the sale of other goods and as many traders resorted to increased hawking activity, the low prices paid for produce magnified the difficulties of middlemen.

A much more significant factor was the pull of the railway and the movement of the coast trade to Bonthe. Many chiefs in Gallinas country lost their wealth and source of power and this complicated affairs in Northern Sherbro. In the Bulom chiefdoms of the district however, cheap river transport, a wealth of fruit bearing trees, the effective husbandry of the crop coupled with land (local laws) and "Poro" regulations

all helped to ensure a lively trade. So did the presence of European firms established from Mano to Bonjema which became an important outlet for Gallinas produce.

Many indigenous industries in Northern Sherbro also witnessed a renaissance, due partly to the high cost of imported textiles. As dyers multiplied, great quantities of indigo were brought to the district. The blue "saful" cloth sold expensively and the chief exponents of this art (from Senegal) received handsome fees from their pupils. Weavers were active in Gallinas country and the scarcity of the imported Nigerian cloth led to desperate attempts to imitate it. In fact some weavers began working in silk with the help of spinning wheels, and embroidery as another art developed simultaneously. Originating in a rather "jejune European tradition" it expanded rapidly and soon acquired a local peculiarity in design "which far surpasses its origins."⁷⁷

To the north west in Karene the chief factors influencing trade between 1913 and 1916 were the presence of the railway and cheap river transport on the Scarcies, European enterprise at Rosanda, the smallpox epidemic of 1916 and the poor prices paid for commodities like kola.⁷⁸ Trade was generally successful in the district in 1917, but European firms were showing very little enterprise on the coast due to the failure to open up factories on the Scarcies during the year. Paradoxically however the difficulties and high prices introduced by the war stimulated African industry. Due to the high price of salt the people of Samu chiefdom began extracting salt, (whose samples consisted of coarse white

crystalline sodium chloride in a moist condition) which sold at 3/ per bushel.⁷⁹ Of all the districts in the Protectorate, Ronietta was the most affected and between 1914 and 1918 the story was one of marked depression caused mainly by the call of many to the colours, the fluctuations of world market prices for palm kernels and kola and the escalating prices for imported goods.⁸⁰

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Generally, the depression of 1915, the decline in prices for Sierra Leone's products on the world market, the accumulation of imported merchandise, the restriction of fresh business and the loss of the German market determined the flow of trade throughout the war years.⁸¹ Despite declining prices prospects for the kola trade were still encouraging in 1915. The hope was predicated on the buoyant groundnut trade in Senegal which it was hoped would increase the purchasing power of the Senegalese and induce them to buy more of Sierra Leone's kola. On the other hand, low prices for ginger failed to stimulate production and whilst attractive prices and a high demand for anilene dye substitutes boosted Sierra Leone's camwood trade with Britain, the price dropped dramatically in June 1915 from £25 to £8 per ton.⁸²

If the kola trade yielded a total revenue of £302,720 in 1916, the credit must go directly to the Syrians who conducted the trade almost entirely with other West African colonies.⁸³ Syrian enterprise helped to mitigate the hazards which affected the kola industry in 1917 when only 1,702 tons were exported; this notwithstanding the total value for kola

exports was higher compared with the figures for 1916, chiefly because the price rose in October 1917 to an unprecedented £30 per annum.⁸⁴ The same trend was to govern the ginger trade in 1918 when high prices stimulated harvesting and sustained the demand for the crop until the onset of the rains.

Declining prices and the ban placed on the importation of hides into the U.K. however combined to dislocate this industry. The price of hides advanced between 1914 and 1916, but it dropped steadily in 1918 in spite of a plentiful supply. As buyers evinced little enthusiasm for the commodity, many of the hides stored became subject to the ravages of insects and the cattle plague in French Guinea in 1918 further hindered the future of the market. By dint of fortuitous circumstances many kola trees reached the age of fruit bearing in 1918 so that the trade with neighbouring colonies (2,302 tons) yielded a total revenue of £397,726, - £76,599 higher than that for 1917.

On the whole comparative figures show that the import and export trade for 1918 surpassed in value those for any year since August 1914. The aggregate increase of trade over 1917 was £366,460 or 11.45% and as the Comptroller of Customs argued, the probable reason was the high prices paid for most commodities⁸⁵ but the oil palm industry was to receive severe shocks caused by a combination of internal and external factors.

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3. Among the sources of revenue were customs receipts, store and hawkers' licences, railway receipts, port, harbour and lighthouse dues, warehouse rents, spirit licences, the House tax, and other miscellaneous receipts such as sales from salvaged goods. The chief sources of revenue were derived from exports of the produce and manufacture of the Colony such as palm kernels, palm oil, ginger and kola. Merewether hoped that the additional duty of 9d per gallon on spirits introduced in 1913, would more than cover the loss on groceries, edibles and salt. See P.R.O. C.O. 267/550/22202 - Merewether to Harcourt, 17/6/13 and Comptroller of Customs to Colonial Treasurer, 22/5/13.
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8. P.R.O. C.O. 267/560/39106 - Acting Comptroller of Customs to Colonial Secretary, 29/9/14.
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22. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. D.C. Sherbro 41/1914- D.C. Sherbro to Colonial Secretary 11/9/14.

23. *ibid* - D.C. Port Loko to Colonial Secretary 29/9/14;
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27. P.R.O. C.O. 267/564/2473 - Merewether to Harcourt
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28. P.R.O. C.O.267/564/8832 - Merewether to Harcourt 10/2/15
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30. P.R.O. C.O. 267/565/22818 - Comptroller of Customs,
Eleventh Annual Report, 1914; See also Blue Book Report, 1914
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34. P.R.O. C.O. 267/571/25737 - Wilkinson to Bonar law,
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35. P.R.O. C.O. 272/92 - Sierra Leone Blue Book 1915
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36. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/50804 -Blue Book Report 1916
37. P.R.O. C.O. 267/580/10112 -Report on the Blue Book of
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38. P.R.O. C.O. 267/574/17206 -Wilkinson to Walter Long
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39. Hitherto no export duties existed in Sierra Leone. For
all these measures see P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/57616- Wilkinson
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42. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. No.302 M.P.Cus 94/19 -Acting Governor E. Evelyn to Milner, 11/6/19 and P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/37780 -Annual Trade Report on the Colony 1918. Much of what follows is based on this report.

43. *ibid*; For the spirit trade see Table 1V of the Appendix to the report.

44. *ibid*, p.15.

45. *ibid* - See table -"Comparisons of the principal articles of native produce in the years 1913, 1917 and 1918 and the average value of the exports in the five years ending 1918."

46. *ibid* - table -"A comparison of the value of commercial exports for 1913, 1917 and 1918."

47. *ibid*. Most of the ordinances were made under the authority of the "Customs Consolidation Ordinance (no.12) 1902."

48. *ibid* - Report 1918, pp. 40-41.

49. The P.W.D. and the Medical Department were particularly notorious in this regard. For the views of the public on this matter since 1912, see for example, S.L.W.N. 13/1/12 and that for 27/1/12 which referred to the P.W.D. as the "Public Waste Department."

50. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P. G.H. 8/19 of 22/1/19 - Wilkinson to Secretary of State with reference to despatch from Secretary of state No.301 of 27/12/18 regarding the Appropriation Ordinance.

51. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P. 1/19, G.H. 14/19 - Colonial Secretary to Governor 16/1/19

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Chapter 8: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT II

Just as World War 1 complicated the problems faced by the colonial government in raising revenue, the closure of the German market dealt a severe blow to the oil palm industry. As Sierra Leone's major export commodity, kernels far exceeded in value the contributions made by other products in the export trade of the dependency. From at least 1901, the output of kernels increased till it reached an all time high in 1913 when a total tonnage of 49,201 yielded £920,943 (or 68% out of £1,376,603 derived from the produce and manufacture of the country) Once the first sod for railway building was cut in 1896, commercial expansion in colonial Sierra Leone became a function of developments in communications. The railway itself reached the palm belt in 1904 with significant consequences for overall revenue. Whereas between 1901 and 1903, the average value of kernel exports was £186,000, between 1905 and 1908, it was £344,000; in the same period, the total value of exports rose from £375,000 to £711,000.¹

Regarded as a "sovereign tree" by Alldridge² the oil palm (elaeis guineensis) in Sierra Leone was found in five varieties (locally known as kawei, henoi, jiakeye, kpolei and togboi) with "togboi" yielding the highest oil content in the pericarp and the fruit. The tree which prospered on the rich soil of the mangrove accumulations, abounded in Mahela, up the Scarcies river and in the lower part of Limba district.

It required "neither planting nor watering" and served diverse purposes - providing food and drink, oil for locally manufactured lamps and above all, employment.⁴ It was partly the cessation of German trade, the lack of adequate machinery in Britain and the failure by British farmers to use the kernel cake as fodder that arrested progress in this industry in 1914.

In November when all enemy firms had been closed in the Gold Coast and Nigeria the German firm Deutsche Kamerun Gesselleschaft in Sierra Leone was refused permission to ship 500 bags of kernels to London.⁵ In many ways, wartime conditions in Britain impinged significantly on developments in the oil palm industry. Desperate to eradicate competition and secure the gains derived from acting as intermediaries between British manufacturers and West African producers, the London and Liverpool Chambers of Commerce were making strident calls after August 1914 for the closure of German trading establishments in Sierra Leone.⁶ The only drawback was the dearth of machinery in Britain to take full advantage of the opportunity created; and although France was to receive some of West Africa's surplus kernels in return for removing the surtax d'entrepot,⁷ Britain could only deal with 7,000 tons out of the 30,000 tons she was expected to receive in August 1914. In addition, a market still had to be found for the kernel cake⁸ to prevent Sierra Leone's and Nigeria's kernels reaching Germany via Holland.⁹

The feverish efforts exerted by British merchants in their bid to secure the trade for Britain culminated in a meeting

held at the Colonial Office in August 1914. The object was to find a means of alleviating "the serious loss likely to be incurred by the colonies concerned" whose annual production of palm kernels was valued at £7,500,000. Some 10,000 tons of kernels were taken up in Britain by the African Oil Mills Company (Liverpool) by smaller mills and margarine makers, but they could not absorb the 26,000 tons available monthly.

Various Chambers of Commerce and companies operating oil mills were therefore to be urged to extend the oil crushing industry in Britain.¹⁰ Thereafter, the London Chamber of Commerce circularised all heads of Agricultural Training Colleges and Experimental stations in Britain and the Royal Agricultural Society of England with an appeal to bring the palm nut cake to the notice of farmers in order to establish a regular demand there.¹¹ Sir Owen Philipps even promised to reciprocate the efforts of millers in Hull or any port prepared to take up the matter by ensuring that the shipping companies provide the necessary service to meet their requirements. The desire was to use the war to secure the profits hitherto enjoyed by the Germans.

The commercial possibilities to be reaped from using the kernel cake were enormous. Apart from utilising palm kernel oil in the manufacture of soap and candles and in the preparation of various edible fats - cooking fats, vegetable butter - the meal or cake was valuable as cattle feed. Above all in Germany, palm kernel cake produced through the solvent process was found to be more digestible than meals from hydraulic presses.¹² Against this background, the press came

to constitute a powerful lobby for West African kernels, urging British farmers to shed their conservatism and take up the feed-stuff.¹³ But whilst British merchants attempted to come to terms with the loss of the German market, the impact on the oil palm industry in Sierra Leone was slight in 1914. The dependency could clearly not escape the consequences of the loss of German trade and the war merely aggravated the decline that had begun in late 1913. The major variable governing trade in the Railway District was the depression in prices paid for palm kernels.

As producers held back their kernels in anticipation of high prices, production dropped between May and September.¹⁴ If there was a contraction in both the value and tonnage of palm kernel exports between January and December 1914, the war was not the only cause for by December, many steamers were still plying the route between Freetown and Liverpool. Favourable prices governed the palm oil market in 1914 yet, ironically, there was a drop of 95,077 gallons in exports from January to July compared with the same period for 1913. The partial failure of the first rice crop, the inducement to work on road construction and falling prices after August restricted expansion in the oil palm industry.

In Sherbro in particular only a quarter of the usual supply was produced between August and December. The industry was further affected by chiefs who diverted labour towards town building¹⁵ and due to low prices coupled with the disturbances resulting from the Leopard murder cases, producers became "indifferent and careless in the manufacture

of the oil".¹⁷ The decline in the palm kernel trade was reflected in the import sector, and in low railway and customs receipts. With the Liverpool market offering only £15 or £16 a ton a few purchases were being made at £11 leaving the trader with a very small margin of profit after paying increased charges for freight and insurance.¹⁸ By December however, there was little need for pessimism; the decision to erect crushing mills in Britain was to alleviate the problems in the oil palm industry the only drawback being the shortage of ships to carry further cargo.

In January 1915, the London Oil and Tallows Trade Association passed a resolution in support of active steps to secure West Africa's palm kernel trade for Britain. These efforts began to yield positive results by March. Eight firms in Britain took up the challenge whilst others ordered machinery needed to adapt their existing plant to handling kernels. 14 institutions also began elaborate experiments with the kernel cake with encouraging results at Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and North Wales University Colleges. This was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the price of the cake (£6/10 per ton compared with £5/5 from 1907-14) What was now needed was government's cooperation to render the market in Britain "less dependent upon foreign countries than hitherto."¹⁹

By September, the British Incorporated Chamber of Commerce was also evincing an interest in the trade and needed an assurance that they would not lose their trade at the end of the war.²⁰ Even the Board of Trade now came to devote

careful attention to the merits of palm nut and coco-nut cake and meals, disseminating their findings in two pamphlets.²¹

In spite of these positive developments in Britain local factors were to prove a hindrance to the palm kernel and palm oil trade in Sierra Leone later in the year. Initially in the Railway District, the palm kernel trade showed a depressed but reviving market, but 1915 was a record one for the palm oil trade as exports shot up to the highest levels (218,400 tons) since 1908. The sharp rise in prices at the beginning of the oil season jolted producers on to increased production,²² but elsewhere in Sherbro, the export trade in kernels remained risky because of the lack of shipping and storage facilities.²³ The problems which plagued the industry are best appreciated by an examination of developments in Ronietta. 1915 was essentially a year of mixed fortunes and unfulfilled promise for the industry. That year when the fruit was ripe, prices for kernels fell from 8/ to 2/6d per imperial bushel and the lack of a market for the commodity posed serious problems.

Even though the Makump-Makeni line was formally opened to traffic facilitating the tapping of new palm bearing areas, only 2,219 tons of kernels were carried on the branch line from Makeni to Bauya (as against 2,702 tons for 1914) The same quantity (64 tons) of palm oil was carried on the extension as in 1914 but the result showed that the proportion of palm oil to palm kernels sold, exceeded that for previous years though local demand for palm oil for home consumption and for the manufacture of "native soap"

increased due to the high cost of imported goods.

Opportunities for the production of plantation palm oil were lost in 1915 as local factors continued to insinuate themselves into the industry, culminating in the closure of Messrs Lever Brothers experiment at Yonibana. In spite of their huge capital investment, (£30,000) the company gave 12 months notice that they would surrender their lease of land on 1st March. This development was largely connected with the dearth of labour for expressing the oil. The bulk of the labour for cracking the nuts devolved on to the women whilst the men collected the fruit, transported it for sale, built houses and cleared roads.²⁴

Although the company's mills were situated on the branch line of the railway in an area blessed with fine palm belts, its very short history in Yonibana since 1912, began in less auspicious circumstances. The revenue of Sierra Leone was not destined to benefit from attempts at erecting depericarping machinery in the Protectorate designed to generate increased oil yields from the country's most important resource. Ten years after the failure of Lever Brothers, scientific cultivation of the oil palm had still not begun in Sierra Leone. Lever's problems initially began over the price to be paid for the fruit. The Company offered 30/ per ton whilst the chiefs requested 60/. Though the ultimate price accepted was 30/, insufficient fruit was forthcoming. In 1915, the company (with the approval of government) employed labourers to cut and collect the fruit, paying 1/6d per 15 heads delivered on the mono-rail (laid

down to Small Magbassa) and 3d per 15 heads to the owners of the palms through the headmen. This worked out at approximately 1 ¹/₂d per head. But the almost insurmountable problems of labour forced the company to abandon its concession in December 1915.

The available evidence shows that failure was due to the low price paid for the fruit, the disinclination of producers to carry palm heads over long distances, the inadequacy of transport facilities from the palm belts to the factory, the antagonistic attitude of small traders who persuaded producers against supplying the company and as M.T. Dawe (Commissioner for Lands and Forest) argued, "the inability of the native to appreciate the advantages" of selling his palm fruit - losing the pericarp oil which he required for domestic use and the palm nut which provided employment for wives and children in their spare hours.²⁵

Phillips has argued that the company failed because it did not understand that existing methods of oil production were deeply embedded in a specific sexual division of labour,²⁶ yet perhaps of greater importance was the fact that the company lacked any rights over the palm trees in Sierra Leone. They had no rights to collect the fruits themselves neither could they force the people to do so.²⁷ Therefore export of kernels whilst increasing in volume (39,624 tons as against 35,915 tons for 1914) depreciated in value (£504,033 as against £559,313 for 1914) At one time, prices on the European market for palm kernels fell as low as £12/10 a ton whereas the price for 1914 never dropped below £17. Because

prices were well maintained throughout the year the aggregate trade for palm oil exports increased in both volume (1,935 tons) and value (£45,671). The establishment of crushing mills in Britain by the end of December 1915 enabled her to take 384,006 gallons out of a total volume of 481,157 gallons whilst France received 89,869 gallons.²⁸

By April 1916, millers and crushers, margarine manufacturers and agriculturalists were responding to the more vigorous campaigns to secure West Africa's palm kernel trade for Britain. Crushers in the neighbourhood of Hull began importing kernels and crushing them for the first time; in return shippers agreed to deliver kernels at Hull at the same rate for freight as to Liverpool. During 1915, 18 steamers from West Africa had delivered 51,248 tons of palm kernels valued at £827,653 to Hull and 178,060 tons to Liverpool. The results showed a great increase in the tonnage of palm kernels taken up by Britain between 1913 and 1915. The margarine industry expanded and as high prices for butter increased so did the demand for margarine; new factories were erected to absorb an increasing quantity of edible oil. The attention of farmers in Britain was now drawn to a new material and the industry was materially assisted by the high cost of other food stuffs commonly used by farmers.²⁹

By August 1918, the Committee on Edible Nuts and Oils had met to consider the position of West Africa's trade in palm kernels and other edible and oil producing nuts and seeds. In order to secure these commodities for crushing industries in Britain, the committee suggested imposing an export duty

of £2 per ton on kernels which was to be remitted if the kernels were crushed in Britain. In Sierra Leone however, many variables were affecting production. Producers received low prices, suffered from the activities of a group of foreign firms which had constituted themselves into a Combine to preserve their interests, lack of shipping space and delays which caused the kernels to deteriorate in quality.

Willing to reciprocate the efforts of British industrialists, Wilkinson argued that what was needed was increased production to be secured through extending the railway into Kono and Limba country, improving wharf facilities and making transportation cheaper in order to secure better prices for producers. Above all, the destruction of the oil palm for its "cabbage" and for palm wine had to be guarded against. The Sierra Leone section of the London Chamber of Commerce however rejected proposals to hold shippers to their bonds until they provided documents to show that their kernels had been delivered to a seed crusher in Britain.³⁰

The Committee argued that for many years, German traders in British West Africa had enjoyed and even abused British hospitality and because Australia had successfully eliminated German influence in the base metal industry, it was suggested that the same could be done for the palm kernel trade. What was now needed was an effective demand in Britain to match the supply. It was obvious therefore that the aim was not merely to confine the trade to the U.K. but to retain it in British hands long after the war.³¹ The impact of these measures was felt in the dependency where local factors now

aided production.

The Railway District came to occupy the premier place in the palm kernel trade, sending 19,539 tons down the railway. The trading station at Sumbuya also contributed immensely to the total produce shipped from Bonthe. 293,489 gallons of oil were also shipped from the district showing an increase of 75,000 gallons over that for for 1915. With yearly prices on the European market averaging £36 and £22 for palm oil and palm kernels respectively, it was mainly increased prices and the willingness of producers to respond to increased demands which determined the export trade in oil and kernels in 1916.³²

The trade in palm kernels managed to recapture its usual vitality recording an increase in tonnage in both volume and value. 45,316 tons valued £680,705 were exported to the U.K. whilst higher prices for palm oil on the European market ensured that 406,516 gallons were sent to Britain and 129,025 gallons to France which had successfully replaced Germany in the produce trade.³³ The only problem facing the industry in 1916 was the shortage of shipping space. The proposal that Elder Dempster be given additional tonnage to ship more palm kernels to Britain for the manufacture of glycerine was rejected and even when Lever Brothers bought six more ships for the purpose, three were taken over by the Admiralty.

By February 1917, the Sierra Leone government was opposing the proposed price of £12 as too low for a ton of kernel. This was predicated on the fact that it was bound to affect

production. The reaction was in response to Lord Devenport's attempts to reduce the price of kernels without providing enough freight for merchants or offering a price at Liverpool which made for a reasonable profit. As the activities of the Combine in Freetown were regarded as "bad enough," the Secretary of State ordered that the Ministry of Food purchase all kernels at a fixed price. This was essential as merchants and producers had little influence over the differences in prices between Liverpool and the west coast of Africa, which were in turn determined by increased freights, war insurance, delays in shipments and interest charges for stocks in hand.

Under pressure from the Sierra Leone and Nigerian governments Walter Long ordered that prices at Liverpool be fixed at £12 a ton. On 20th March Mr. Bigland was appointed to control the supply of vegetable oil, fats and oil seeds and the disposal of the manufactured products such as oil, cake, meal, soap and margarine, and to prohibit the import of oleaginous material except under licence.³⁵ Then on 4th August the Colonial Office ordered all West African colonies except the Gambia to prohibit the export of all fats, animal and vegetable oils except to the U.K.³⁶ Through such laws the government hoped to secure the trade firmly in the hands of British manufacturers. But at a time when Wilkinson was frowning on an offer of £12 a ton for kernels, H.M. government was proposing to fix the price at £10.

The news which leaked out before the governor declared it jolted the Combine into action and in an attempt to preempt any move to raise the price, they declared £10 a fair

bargain. The serious opposition which this elicited from smaller European firms, Syrian merchants and others operating through Messrs Pickering and Berthoud and the Cooperative Wholesale Society, ultimately ensured that fairer prices were paid. Members of the Legislative and Executive Councils also saw in the proposals of 20th March the potential for enhancing the activities of the Combine and for the "pooling of profits" that might not "serve any imperial purpose." Rather they favoured competition provided the price paid allowed a reasonable profit for the producer.³⁷

In 1917 the average monthly price for kernels on the European market was (£25 per ton) the highest since 1914. The same was true for oil (£44 per ton). The effects were immediately felt in Railway District, Ronietta³⁸ and Northern Sherbro where collection of the palm fruit was well maintained with price levels touching 8/ per bushel.³⁹ Increased demands for the oleaginous products of West Africa ensured that the volume (58,020 tons) and value (£842,508) of Sierra Leone's palm kernels peaked to record levels - the highest since 1914. However shipping difficulties and other expenses were to force producers to accept greatly reduced prices. The fact also that they had to contend with increases of between 200% and 300% for imported goods had an adverse effect on production. Though fewer gallons (543,183 valued at £62,385) were exported in 1917, (unlike 557,751 gallons valued at £53,622 for 1916) attractive prices on the European market ensured higher values than those for 1916. Of the aggregate trade in palm oil, 526,043 gallons went to France. The decline in the quantity exported was mainly due to the local

demand for palm oil for home consumption and for the manufacture of "native soap."

By 1918 discussions had come to centre on the methods to be employed to control "essential raw materials" including oleaginous products for the British empire after the war. It was envisaged that 889,000 tons of oils and fats would be needed alone for the U.K. to meet the requirements of the margarine, soap and candle industries. The probable requirements of Allied countries also needed to be ascertained. It was feared that linseed oil from Russia and Argentina, soya beans from China and copra from the Dutch East Indies would not suffice for Germany's needs after the war, and since she would thus have to look to British West Africa for palm kernels, there was an even greater need for firmer control by Britain and France.⁴¹ Thus on 4th November a differential import duty first imposed on tin ore in the Straits and Nigeria was also extended to West Africa's palm kernels - to be in force for five years after the war.⁴²

It was obvious that the objective was clearly part of an economic offensive designed to exploit the fears of German business men regarding the future of German trade after the war and "to force them to seek peace in order to save themselves from economic ruin." More importantly, it was a "trade war" calculated to establish a basis for bargaining in the peace negotiations, create material injury to Germany and by so doing, weaken her capacity to wage war. In short, it was to be a "policy of war after the war."⁴³

These developments on the international scene were not matched by developments in the oil palm industry in Sierra Leone. Even though 1918 was statistically the best on record from the standpoint of revenue, the country's domestic exports shrank considerably in both volume and value - yielding an aggregate tonnage of 41,858 valued at £716,885. This contrasted sharply with figures for 1917 (60,192 tons for both palm kernels and palm oil valued at £904,893) Such paradoxes owed their origins to the low prices paid to producers, acute labour shortages caused by the recruitment of carriers and the increased prices of kerosene which forced many people in Sherbro to turn to palm oil for fuel. Low prices were in turn a function of the speculative nature of the trade, the extraordinary fluctuations in freight and shipping difficulties in Sherbro.⁴⁴

Generally, the "flu" epidemic, the early rains of 1918 and the high cost of imported goods combined to paralyse progress within the industry. Influenza, felt most acutely in August and September - usually the best months for kernel shipping - accounted for a deficit of 13,015 tons. The early rains which hampered rice cultivation, diverted the energies of men, women and children from nut cracking to food production and because low prices were paid in a period of high prices for imported goods, the result was widespread apathy among producers.

The same factors affected the palm oil market in 1918. In fact not a single gallon of oil left the country in September. It should be observed however that palm oil

production was always an occasional rather than a regular industry;⁴⁵ local methods of oil production often involved a long and laborious process and producers were "routiniers dans leurs habitudes et en general assez peu disposes a leurs modifiers."⁴⁶ More importantly for our purposes, producers throughout the war found themselves subjected to the manipulative tactics of a Combine of firms operating in the dependency. By 1913 foreign firms like the C.F.A.O. and Lever Brothers were clearly striking deep roots in commercial activities in the Colony. They were also desperately seeking concessions to install machinery and light railway rolling stock to express the oil from the pericarp of the palm fruit and to transport it to the main railway stations.⁴⁷

The beginnings of the activities of the Combine in Freetown could be traced to 1915 when Messrs Paterson Zochonis and the C.F.A.O. with their stores at Sawpit, barricaded the embankment at the wharf thereby preventing local traders from using the customs shed which normally attended to crafts from Sherbro, Kambia, the Scarcies and Port Loko. Local traders saw in this an attempt to establish control over the trade by ensuring that their "coaxers" or "runners" took trade from the crafts to them only. Government ignored initial protests from Krio traders like John Benjamin and William Cole and by the time the activities of the Combine came to light in 1916, it found it had left it too late to protect the interest of African traders.⁴⁸

By December 1916 Wilkinson was forced to acknowledge the fact that the fate of local producers was in the hands of the

Combine at the centre of which stood the Freetown Chamber of Commerce. Whilst producers prepared the oil and kernels for the market, they received very low prices though they had to pay high prices for imported goods. The effects were particularly felt in the kernel trade in which producers had to contend with reduced prices, high rates for freights by Elder Dempster, payments for war risks to ships and insurance on the kernels. The Combine also exploited the shortage of shipping by allocating space only among its members. This they justified on the grounds that they incurred losses due to the special rates paid on available steamers. To defray such losses they reduced producer prices but Wilkinson doubted the authenticity of their claims. Evidence that the Combine was making huge profits was adduced from the commission paid on profits by the parent firms (in London) to local agents "who are notoriously prosperous..." and from the discrepancy in the rates paid for kernels in Freetown and Bonthe. In December 1913, the price paid at Bonthe was £17.10 as against £23 per ton in England; in 1916 the Bonthe price was £12 as against £25 per ton in England.

As few steamers called at Bonthe the profits which hitherto accrued from cheap rates of freight were now rarely made. The Combine thus tried to secure this by a further reduction in the price paid to producers. African traders responded by combining with Syrians at Bonthe to buy small vessels to send produce to Freetown. But the Combine moved vigorously to secure lighterage to check competition. The prevalent belief among Africans therefore was that only the return of the Germans would revive competition but Wilkinson was convinced

that "the Germans would join the Combine."⁴⁹

Though the clout of the Combine was not as great as that in Nigeria the Colonial Office was forced to admit its existence in Freetown in 1917.⁵⁰ By this time also the press and various Traders' Associations in Freetown and Bonthe were petitioning the administration to "do its duty and suppress this illegal form of business."⁵¹ Members of the group were loath to be referred to as a Combine and adopted the euphemistic title of "Produce Committee." Their principal objective was to regulate the price of kernels. They aimed to secure "fair shares" of the kernel, oil and ginger trade for their members on a scale of percentages determined by the average shipment made by each member firm before the formation of the Committee, eliminate the "coaxers" or "runners" who acted as middlemen from the produce trade and secure tonnage space for its members. By these methods local producers and traders were left stranded; so were four smaller firms excluded from the group because they could not provide evidence of shipment before the war to qualify them for membership. However the vigorous opposition posed by this group helped to prevent the Combine "adopting the methods of an unscrupulous trust."⁵²

Whilst the activities of the Combine served to undermine the enthusiasm of producers in the oil palm industry shipping difficulties throughout the war compounded the crisis with significant consequences for revenue. Sierra Leone's export trade in oil and kernels depended extensively on a successful shipping trade with the port of Freetown and Sherbro. The

withdrawal of the Woermann Linie shipping service which had hitherto carried the bulk of palm oil and palm kernel exports made Sierra Leone's shipping very erratic. From 11th August 1914 rates for freights and passages were increased by 50%⁵³ on Elder Dempster Lines which now enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the shipping trade. Though these rates were later reduced to 20%, shipping was grinding to a halt by September when Elder Dempster complained that their steamers had been suspended.⁵⁴

The hope that the steamer service between the U.S.A. and West Africa would be doubled with the withdrawal of German shipping⁵⁵ did not materialise so that in Ronietta recourse was had to the mail boat service which plied the route between Moyamba, Sembehun and the Bagru river.⁵⁶ The decline in customs receipts in 1914 was therefore partly the result of the dislocation of sea-borne commerce. From August 1914 German steamers stopped calling at Mano Salija, Sulima, Gene, Mahela Kikonkeh and Provo Point in the Scarcies. One significant consequence of this was the dominance Britain came to enjoy in the overall import and export trade of the dependency. Though there was a decrease of 4 1/2 per cent in shipping tonnage in 1914, British tonnage by this time had increased by 59,601.

The contraction in shipping which was later to affect the palm oil and palm kernel industries should be attributed to the withdrawal of German ships, the lack of a market for palm produce in the earlier months of the war, the uncertainty regarding the safety of transit and the extremely high rates

of insurance.⁵⁷ If the shortage of freight and the consequent difficulty of obtaining materials from England forced the government to abandon a large number of new works provided for in the estimates for 1915,⁵⁸ the crisis was exacerbated by the requirements of the army and navy, by abnormal shipping casualties and by the internment of ships in enemy ports since August 1914. In 1915, 1,146 vessels with an aggregate tonnage of 1,635,119 entered and cleared from the port (compared with 1,788 ships with 2,780,18 tons in 1914) and although Britain was responsible for 94% of the shipping trade,⁵⁹ this development was hardly enough to fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of German ships.

By August 1915 the lack of shipping services was causing feverish competition among shippers for space on Elder Dempster ships and because the Combine was influencing the allocation of available space, smaller firms, small traders and shippers were particularly vulnerable. By this time Admiralty requirements had taken up 25% of Elder Dempster's total tonnage while regular steamers were being diverted to meet army and naval needs. Further congestion at home ports such as Liverpool and the difficulties of re-exporting impeded the prompt discharge of steamers. Not even the large firms could agree to Elder Dempster's suggestion that available steamer space be divided "pro rata", on the basis of pre-war average shipments. Smaller firms and African producers were therefore at a disadvantage since Elder Dempster decided to deal with "the regular rather than the casual and new shipper."⁶⁰

The result was a flood of complaints to the Colonial Office and threats by some British firms to refuse orders from West Africa for "the name of Elder Dempster stinks in the nostrils of the Railway Companies here..."⁶¹ The export trade of Sierra Leone must have suffered from this bickering in commercial circles as smaller firms were "quietly" being "frozen out."⁶² The uncertainty governing the shipping trade was partly responsible for the decline in the palm kernel industry where shipments fell from 559,313 tons in 1914 to 504,033 tons in 1915.

The same factors persisted in 1916 when only 796 ships with a tonnage of 1,553,312 entered and cleared from the port (compared with 1,146 ships with an aggregate of 1,635,119 tons in 1915) Britain continued to dominate the shipping trade with the dependency but despite increased revenues in 1916, the disruption in maritime commerce placed severe restrictions on both the inward and outward trade of the country.⁶³ Conditions had not altered by 1917 and the decrease in tonnage (1,526,640) was mainly due to the "intensified campaign of frightfulness on the sea..."⁶⁵

Paradoxically in 1918 when the export trade in palm oil and palm kernels declined, mercantile activity with the Colony experienced a great revival. Returns show a total of 821 ships with a tonnage of 1,736,247. This was lower when compared with the immediate pre-war period, yet from a commercial standpoint the results were in many ways satisfactory. "The successful keeping of the seas" and "the efficiency of the convoy system" attracted many ships to

Freetown and Mahela even at a time when the submarine menace was most threatening. Generally shipping in 1918 did not adhere to the normal routes of peace time. Many vessels were chartered out of their own countries and though French and Belgian steamers no longer called regularly at the port, the establishment of a naval base at Freetown and its role as the connecting link in the great convoy system conferred many more blessings on the port in 1918 than in any other year since August 1914. Some of the principal steamers which called at the port included the British and Africa Steamship Navigation Company, Elder Dempster Lines, the African Steamship Company and the Union Castle Line.⁶⁶

On the whole, the vicissitudes and shifts in the palm kernel and palm oil trade imposed severe constraints on the fortunes of revenue throughout the war. Foreign (merchant) capital represented by Lever Brothers failed to stimulate development or growth within the oil palm industry and the strict adherence to traditional modes of production by local producers did little to alleviate the difficulties introduced by shortage of shipping space. Only in 1925 did the Secretary of State begin to address the question of improving the quality and increasing the quantity of palm oil and kernels through scientific methods of production. This was due to the dangers confronting West Africa's palm oil trade caused by competition from the Dutch West Indies and Malaya, where scientific cultivation was producing superior oil and kernels on a far more prolific scale than the "wild and uncultivated oil palm of West Africa."⁶⁷

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62. P.R.O. C.O. 554/30/35413.

63. P.R.O. C.O. 267/575/50804 - Blue Book Report 1916.

64. P.R.O. C.O. 267/570/19284.

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66. In 1918, Britain was responsible for 96.16% of the steam vessels which called at Freetown, both in terms of the number of ships and tonnage. See P.R.O. C.O. 267/581/37780 - Annual Trade Report on the Colony 1918.

67. Sessional Paper No. 25, 1925 (S.O.A.S.) p.1.

Chapter 9: WAR, RICE AND FOOD SHORTAGES.

Around 8 p.m. on the night of 18th July 1919, there was nothing beyond the usual liveliness that characterised the torch light processions held in connection with the Peace Celebrations - a victory parade designed to mark the end of the war. Around 8.15 p.m. also there was nothing beyond a number of parties parading the streets, singing patriotic airs. By 8.30 however, an attempt was made to break into a Syrian's shop at Westmoreland Street in the West end of Freetown. Egged on by police inability to curb the first excesses, the crowds swelled and the looting of Syrian shops became common place.¹

The Anti-Syrian Riots of 1919, the subject of great controversy among scholars,² do not directly concern us here. Rather, the aim is to show to what extent the war contributed to the outbreak of violence in post-war Sierra Leone. Far from attributing sole blame to the Syrians, it is argued that the riots were, inter alia, a function of socio-economic forces unleashed partly by the Great War; in all this, the main trigger for urban and rural radicalism was widespread famine caused by rice and food shortages.

This is not to deny the fact that the displacement of the Krio by the Syrian entrepreneurs from their position of pre-eminence in local commerce and Syrian sexual contacts with Krio girls had soured the relationship between both groups.

But World War I had left behind a legacy of distress and privation in both the Colony and Protectorate. The economy itself was in dire straits when compared with the immediate pre-war period. The outbreak of smallpox (1916) and influenza (1918) had exerted a severe strain on the morale of the population. Perhaps more importantly, the failure by government to devise a work scheme for the demobilised soldiers and carriers helped to increase the ranks of the unemployed in Freetown. To this was added the many migrants from the Protectorate who fled to escape the onerous burden of taxation imposed on them by extortionate chiefs. The potential which all this had for the making of an "urban mob" was clearly not lost on the press which by June was commenting on the wave of "vandalism," "burglary and night thefts" that had come to dominate life in Freetown.³

The factors which jolted that mob into a rebellious spirit included the early rains and poor harvests of 1918 which led to the famine of 1919; the frequent incidence of food shortages and high prices of basic commodities, a common feature throughout the war; the hoarding of basic foodstuffs; the inordinate attempts at profiteering by local, European and Syrian traders and above all, the bungling attempts by government to address the food problem. Only by examining these variables can the historian begin to understand the nature and timing of the events of July 1919.

What happened then was essentially a desperate attempt by the masses to find food and stave off the "pinch of hunger,"⁴ for Syrian competition and seduction of Krio girls did not

suddenly become unbearable in July 1919. In a sense therefore the debacle of 1919 centred around rice, the nation's staple. As the Attorney-General rightly argued, "rice" and the failure by government to extend war bonus to all classes "were the pegs on which the riot depended..."⁵ In order to explain the cataclysm of 1919, this chapter examines the nature of rice and food shortages between 1910 and the eve of war, official policy towards rice and food and the general fortunes of the rice crop between August 1914 and 1918.

The acute shortage of rice and other foodstuffs in 1910, was poor augury for the shape of things to come. In many ways, the famine reflected the inability of the local population to adjust to abnormal circumstances and more significantly to effect diversification in agricultural methods and diet. As the nation's chief staple, rice was cultivated extensively in nearly all districts in Sierra Leone - from Moyamba, Kangahun, Mano, Tabe and the inland towns, the growth was reportedly "luxuriant," though from Songo to Rotifunk in Ronietta the excessive heat of the sun scorched the young plants and retarded the litoma and other varieties.⁶

Although maize was grown in both the Colony and Protectorate, producers and consumers had very limited use for it as food apart from boiling, roasting and preparing it as "agidi" (a powdered form). Above all, maize was easily susceptible to weevils and the experiment with seed supplies from the Gold Coast did not in any way alleviate the famine of 1910. Apart from the positive results yielded by Alimamy Tosana, Chief

Caulker of Rotifunk and Pa Bana, (all in the Railway District) the casks of seeds sent to Karene, Northern Sherbro, Ronietta and parts of Railway District, were either in a state of semi-fermentation or were rendered sterile by weevils.⁷

Cassava, a root tuber always supplemented the rice crop. "Foo-foo" (fermented cassava) also generated a lucrative business and sometimes dominated railway freight between Freetown, Bo and beyond. But the shift to "foofoo" production in 1910 exhausted the cassava crop, led to high prices and raised the demand for rice and other crops. "Dr" Abayomi Cole, whilst attributing these problems to poor agricultural methods recommended that cassava be planted separately rather than being "scattered in rice farms." He had tried this successfully by planting 50 acres of cassava at Mabang in the S B Thomas estate and by September 1910, was experimenting with another 20 acres at Kangahun.⁸ But the Mabang experiment was clearly a lone effort designed to mitigate the food problem of 1910.

The abnormally high prices of food made it impossible for some government contractors to fulfil their food contracts. At Bonthe for example, the usual ball of "foofoo," normally sold for 1/2d, was reduced to a quarter of its size for the same price.⁹ The prospects for agricultural diversification were therefore bleak and it was chiefly the desire to achieve variety in diet that led Governor Probyn to commence cooking classes for Krios, the Kroo community and for Protectorate women then resident in Freetown, under the direction of

Abayomi Cole. The overall objective was to make corn into a "palatable foodstuff."¹⁰

Government was however slow to develop a much more consistent policy toward the problem of food shortage. By November 1910 when the crisis had not yet abated, the Comptroller of Customs suggested that the import duty on rice should not be reimposed.¹¹ The shortage itself had been due in part to the insufficiency of seed rice and the early rains of 1909 which interfered with the proper burning of the bush and forced farmers to abandon their farms.¹² So grave was the crisis that many people were forced to either harvest the rice before it was due or cut down young palm trees for food.¹³ Urgent steps were therefore needed to alleviate hunger and prevent the population from committing "very rash acts."¹⁴

In order to prepare for the planting season of 1911, Governor Probyn suggested obtaining "seed yams" and seed corn from the Gold Coast, and groundnuts from the Gambia. These were to be given to chiefs in return for providing labour on the Rowalla railway extension.¹⁵ Only then were sustained efforts begun to improve the agricultural resources of the country. Propaganda work was also started aimed at fostering new products and improved methods of agriculture,¹⁶ but the results of such efforts were yet to be enjoyed nationwide for there were clearly problems well beyond the control of government.

The food scarcity of 1911 on Banana Island was mainly a

function of the unusually high tides and heavy rains which prevented boats from leaving for Freetown.¹⁷ Apart from these problems, government was particularly culpable for failing to encourage individual enterprise. By 1910 for example, many Krios had embraced the philosophy of "back to the land..." as their best hope for prosperity and had therefore started many plantations. Z E Johnson of Hill Farm, Wilberforce, having just returned from the Botanic Gardens at Kew, was exploring different branches of agriculture and only needed enough land to carry out his experiment. His appeal for help however met with a firm rebuff from the Governor.¹⁸

By 1912 other factors were combining with natural hazards to cripple the fortunes of the rice crop. The wave of arrests in connection with the activities of the Human Leopard Society in Bonthe engendered fear and mistrust among many farmers who consequently fled the district leaving the rice to the mercy of birds.¹⁹ In fact conditions approximating those of 1910 had become a regular feature of the agricultural systems of the country. The spasmodic and erratic rainfall ensured severe shortages in many parts of the Protectorate.

As no rice was cultivated in Sherbro District, cassava (a crop low in vitamins and proteins, with a high carbohydrate content and little affected by the vicissitudes of rainfall) formed the main dietary supplement. But the first seedlings failed to germinate in the Railway District. No rains fell till the first week in June in Northern Sherbro and because

the drought encouraged the development of insect pests, 50% of the young rice succumbed to maggots. Similar conditions prevailed in the Limba chiefdoms of Biriwa and Saffroko (to the south east of Koinadugu District) so that by 1912, the "rumour of rice shortage" had become an "annual institution..."²⁰ Government's response then was to start an experimental farm at Njala²¹ designed to introduce some form of crop rotation and alter the allegedly wasteful methods of farming which then involved cutting and burning fresh bush each year. Favourable conditions in 1913 however produced a better crop and reduced the demand for imported rice.²²

As war became imminent in Europe there were grave apprehensions in colonial circles regarding the policy to be pursued in the event of food shortages during an emergency. But the extent to which the issue of rice shortage was to become so politically volatile in 1919 was partly a function of the ad hoc policies pursued by government. According to the Defence Scheme (revised to May 1911) the garrison was to receive supplies of preserved meat, biscuits, groceries and dried vegetables from Britain in the event of war, but the Overseas Defence Committee which considered the question on 24th February 1914, argued that the resources of Britain would be taxed to their utmost in war time.

The Committee also assumed that those dependencies which were not self-supporting were not, by dint of their geographical positions, likely to be cut off from allowances in the event of war and that to maintain large reserves of food supplies in peace time would be very expensive. Therefore, the

provision of granaries in colonies like Sierra Leone had never been contemplated and the O D C was unwilling to recommend it. Rather, they suggested the collection of all food supplies and the purchase of additional supplies from neighbouring territories should the need arise.²³ Governor Merewether was however afraid of the likely consequences of any suspension of mercantile activity should war erupt in Europe. Though the local defence scheme empowered him to seize grain and food in any emergency, the garrison was bound to have first claim on local supplies. Merewether feared that the amount of food in shops, stores and on board ships would not last very long; worse still, even if the export of rice to French Guinea were stopped, the quantity thus obtained would not last the civil population for even one month.²⁴

The O D C even doubted whether in the event of an outbreak of hostilities, the local population would desert the Peninsula for the Protectorate or leave their comparatively isolated homes in the interior for Freetown. In framing their estimates for food supplies, the O D C therefore relied heavily on the census of 1911. With a population of about 67,039 in the Peninsula, the Committee calculated that the monthly quota required for the African population would be 837 tons of rice. To ensure a four month supply therefore, 3,348 tons would be needed. Allowing a pound of flour and 1/2lb of rice a day for each European (307 in all) a total of 3,357 tons for rice, 196 barrels of flour and 500 bags of salt were considered necessary for four months. But there were other problems requiring urgent attention.

It was doubtful whether the necessary supplies would be obtained locally in January when rice was usually harvested; the only feasible alternative it seemed would be to import foreign rice but this would have to be disposed of after six months when locally grown rice would have flooded the market. Another question concerned the preservation of the stock for the only known local method then was to treat the rice with pepper to prevent weevils.

Although the Committee was little apprehensive about the possibility of securing other food supplements such as fish, maize, cassava, palm oil and sweet potatoes, their optimism was to be proved short-lived by the harsh realities of war time and the vagaries of the weather. Not even the alternative of commandeering rice brought down the mouth of the Scarcies held out any promise for such exports merely amounted to about a fifth of the quantity required for one month's supply.

Setting up a government granary was bound to be very expensive. This would have entailed capital expenditure on stores and for purchasing reserve supplies, charges for supervision and the possible loss to be incurred through the need for turning over the stock periodically. The Committee therefore supported the Governor's suggestion that in the event of war, merchants were to maintain a stock of rice and flour for the use of government. Leading firms (such as the Sierra Leone Old Company, G B Ollivant, Paterson Zochonis) were also to pledge a willingness to maintain a standard minimum stock of rice and flour.²⁵ Because of the acute

differences between Sierra Leone and a self-supporting colony like Jamaica, a scheme to provide for the garrison for four months -based partly on available local reserves in government stores, partly on the completion of contracts signed before the commencement of hostilities and partly on what supplies Britain would be able to offer - was prepared.²⁶

The outbreak of war in August 1914 was however to generate fears (albeit unfounded) in official and local circles that the rice crop in most places would be poor. District Commissioners were therefore instructed to purchase surplus rice and to form depots for storing the crop in their districts.²⁷ 146,170lbs of rice had been received in Freetown by 2nd September but this feverish accumulation of the nation's staple did not initially fulfill the purposes for which it was collected and merely plunged the government into serious losses. Merewether found it difficult to dispose of the rice even though it was offered at less than cost price to local merchants, French Guinea and the Gold Coast.²⁸ Further problems confronted the government. Were the rice to be sold, it was doubtful whether there would be enough for the next three months; because the accumulated rice belonged to the 1913 crop, and because of the continued supplies from the Protectorate and the reduced demand for rice in Freetown, deterioration had also begun to set in by September.

Apart from the problem of storage, government also wished to avoid competition with the merchants whilst selling its own

rice. By December therefore though government still had some 40,000lbs in store, much of the rice, was either damaged and unfit for human consumption, or had to be sold at highly reduced rates (6/6d for a bushel of 80lbs). The demands of the military authorities for 100,000lbs could therefore not be met.²⁹

The problems faced by the colonial government in its attempts to address the question of food are best illustrated by an examination of the conditions in the Protectorate in the early months of war. In Ronietta for example, the late rains of 1914 put the first rice planted at the mercy of ants, rats and birds. The erratic rainfall which fell after a second crop had been planted caused the young crop to be scorched by the sun. But by 19th August when orders came to halt purchases, the D C Moyamba was saddled with over 1,000 bushels.

Between October and November new rice flooded the market and not even the very low price of 7/6d a bushel could attract buyers to the government's stocks. The price was thus scaled down to 3/6d at considerable loss to government.³⁰ At Bonthe where the process of accumulation went further, the D C had to dispose of 2,500 bags, scaling the price down from 14/ to 10/ per bushel. Yet it was impossible to sell the rice to the firms from whom the crop had been purchased. Though rice still sold for 13/6d a bushel in the Kittam (Northern Sherbro) the French Company there would not buy as it had considerable stocks in hand. It was also the absence of a uniform selling price which compounded the problems of the

District Commissioner.

By the time the Comptroller of Customs stepped in to provide storage facilities, the price had fallen to 6/3d and the inevitable loss to government revenue was accentuated by increased freight to Freetown and the hazards of temperature which rendered the rice mouldy.³¹ In Northern Sherbro, the problem of transportation was to arouse fears of a possible shortage for May and June 1915. Though the price per bushel was 13/6d by mid August 1914, the Sumbuya rivers were not yet navigable and the D C could not even stock more than 400 bushels.³²

Prospects were no more promising in the Railway District where in Kono country, the late and light rains ensured a late harvest after delayed sowing.³³ Though the late rains had delayed planting in the northern and central parts of Koinadugu District, heavy down pours in July allayed all fears of a shortage but so urgent were government's demands for rice in Freetown that the D C suggested that the house tax be paid in rice. The objective was also to deter planters from parting too readily with their surpluses to traders waiting to stockpile rice and prevent chiefs from selling the crop over the frontier. By the time orders came to stop buying rice, the chiefs in Kabala had collected over 1,000 bushels and the D C was soon caught up in the consequences of feverish accumulation experienced elsewhere.

By October, D C Stanley had about 150 bushels after

despatching the rest to Freetown. At a time when new rice had flooded the market, he could only sell it at reduced rates to the labourers engaged in railway extension.³⁴ The conclusion to be drawn from this massive accumulation of rice, was the unconditional willingness of chiefs to collect the nation's staple at the request of government. Rice collection at the outset of war thus became a yardstick for measuring chiefly loyalty to officialdom. Its plentiful supply united government and people but when severe shortages occurred in 1919, that unity was shattered with disastrous consequences.

THE FORTUNES OF RICE AND FOOD, 1914-1918

Once war erupted, the inevitable restrictions imposed on shipping coupled with the loss of the German market meant that lesser imports of rice, bread, butter, confectionery, provisions and salt entered the country. In fact, the total value of food and drink imports (including tobacco) shrank from £354,488 in 1913 to £268,827 in 1914. When government gave orders for rice collection in August 1914, they had given little thought to the vagaries of the weather and its possible impact on the rice crop. Perhaps the most striking feature of 1914 was the irregular rainfall which resulted in a moderate rice harvest, decreased exports and a considerable rise in the price of the commodity.

Generally Sierra Leone rice was preferred to imported varieties as it was believed to have greater nutritional properties and so commanded higher prices.³⁵ Though Indian varieties were adapted to irrigation in Sierra Leone, the

majority only grew on non-irrigated or swamp areas and the grains were smaller in comparison to Sierra Leone rice. Their flavour was appreciated but farmers showed less interest in their cultivation.³⁶ Among the first victims of the resultant food shortages and high prices of foodstuffs were government contractors like Mr E A Davies who could not meet his obligations to the Colonial Hospital and Prison Department.³⁷

Government's attempts to mitigate the problem involved an experiment with various swamp rice varieties from Sierra Leone, British Guiana, India and Ceylon at Mambolo on the Scarcies river. The Public Works Department also set up a seed store to preserve harvested rice and groundnuts. The Mambolo experiment was however doomed to failure from the outset. The chiefs and people showed no interest in it, allowing birds to destroy the rice when in ear and making public foot paths through the plots to reach their farms. The generally bad fortunes of groundnuts were to compound the food problem in 1914. The crop failed due to bad germination and a fungoid disease (cercospora personata) which killed off the leaves.³⁸

In August 1915, government prohibited the export of rice from Sierra Leone but in spite of the restriction 21,600 bushels (as against 18,705 bushels in 1914) found their way to Conakry and Liberia.³⁹ Official intervention in the question of food shortages in 1916 was chiefly a function of newer factors which were insinuating themselves into the crisis. The heavy rains which precluded the successful burning of the bush, led the Director of Agriculture to conclude that 1916

was "a year of partial famine when rice reached the extraordinary price of 25/ for a colonial bushel of 84lbs." The scarcity itself was aggravated by the demands of troops and carriers from the Cameroons during April and May, this at a time when many people had set aside what rice they required for seed purposes and their own consumption.

Troop movements such as that by a company of the W A R from Freetown via Mabanta to Wongkufu where there was already "a great shortage," impinged significantly on the already depleted supplies. Major Heilborn tried unsuccessfully to purchase between 10 and 20 tons from the principal dealers chiefly because speculators were also holding back their stocks in order to make excessive profits.⁴⁰ As returnees converged on the capital receiving their "food supplies on the broad charitable basis of native brotherhood..." the urban mob that would start the riots of 1919, began to make its presence felt. Observers therefore pointed to the potential for crimes to be committed and advocated the application of the Vagrancy Act.⁴¹

Totally unaware of the stormy clouds that would erupt in July 1919, government once more turned to experimentation on the farm at Njala where specially selected swamp rices produced "large and plump" crops. Even the Indian variety "talatidanna" and British types such as "demerara creole," were found to be worth encouraging. In addition plot 24, mulched with dead leaves and grass, yielded 704lbs of maize and 987lbs of groundnuts in one year. Official efforts at improving the food situation also included the opening of a cocoa station in Northern Sherbro where producers to the east

of Pujehun were already beginning to evince great interest in its cultivation.

Commendable as these efforts were, the farm at Njala was in its infancy and the results achieved never effected a transformation of agricultural practices nationwide. Government's endeavours were further crippled by local peculiarities of the soil and by other factors such as diseases.⁴² As a non-rice producing area, Headquarter District was particularly hit by the shortages and abnormally high prices during the "hungry season." The "slight famine" was also aggravated by the fact that "the cassava crop that year produced a good deal of dry rot in some farms."⁴³

By 1917, the perennial problem of food shortages which government had to address had convinced Governor Wilkinson of the need for agricultural education. In a lengthy and weighty despatch, the Governor argued that the prosperity of Sierra Leone depended on palm products and kola. Sierra Leone itself lacked any great industry beyond the cultivation of food crops for local consumption. The demand for kola was limited and although the output of palm products was likely to be improved by increased transport facilities, there was a limit to the available supply. Agriculture therefore had to be developed first by avoiding shifting cultivation which led to soil exhaustion and deforestation. In fact by 1917, large areas were either desolate or under lalang or elephant grass.

Experiments in deep-hoeing and crop rotation had yielded few

positive results and the reserves set aside by government were either encroached upon or became "the subject of grievances" among farmers. Wilkinson therefore urged the cultivation of more permanent crops such as rubber, coconut, lime, coffee, kola and above all, swamp rice -through natural or artificial irrigation. The only way to achieve this, he argued, was through agricultural instruction whilst relegating literary instruction to second place. He suggested setting up a training college for elementary teachers at Njala to teach the theory of plant life. The pupils who were to be paid 6d a day, were afterwards to be employed as teachers at the rate of 1/ daily. At a time when the same questions were being considered in Lagos, some officials in the Colonial Office, always apt to find fault with the governor, found his proposals "impractical" and ambitious without proposing another.⁴⁴

The prolongation of the war, the curtailment of imports from the United Kingdom and restricted supplies from the United States, forced the authorities in Freetown to continue contemplating other sources of food supply. Because some ships sometimes called at Freetown from Cape Town en route to the U K with shipping space, the chairman of the Food Committee suggested using this space to secure supplies from South Africa.⁴⁵

The situation by 1917 had clearly become urgent. The cost of imported foodstuffs had risen considerably and the demands of large numbers of ships in the harbour intensified the rising cost of local products such as bread, meat, fish, fowls, eggs

and fruits. But while all classes including the European community were affected, it was the indigenous population that suffered most from increased prices of rice, flour and imported necessities of life..." As the Governor argued, "...a rise of a penny or two in the price of a loaf of bread...is a more serious matter to a Creole clerk on a tenth of" a salary of £350 a year.⁴⁶

By this time African members of the Sierra Leone Civil Service were petitioning the government for a war bonus in order to meet "the abnormally increased cost of living..." which had either been doubled or trebled in spite of governments efforts to regulate the prices of foodstuffs. It was obvious that commercial causes had led to these conditions. Forced to purchase his requirements at high prices, the producer had to increase the price of his articles to enable him to do so. What aggravated the situation was the fact that the purchasing power of the sovereign was hardly more than half of its value compared with pre-war days and the shortage of machets for agriculture worsened matters.⁴⁷

The Canary Islands which hitherto supplied onions had since ceased to do so and cargo space was considerably limited on the steamers of the Standard Oil Company which sailed between the U S and West Africa.⁴⁸ In such depressed conditions, West Indian fitters in the Railway Department who found they had to maintain two establishments (one in Freetown and another in the West Indies) also joined the plea for a war bonus.⁴⁹

The available evidence shows that by 1917, official policy towards the question of food shortages had become more interventionist. Even though the rice crop was good in Headquarter District, attempts were made everywhere to diversify the sources of food by planting other crops. The Director of Agriculture selected a site in the district for a Government Model Farm just outside Waterloo.⁵⁰ On the whole, rice farmers in 1917 seemed to have been goaded on to greater activity (due to the problems encountered) planting actively for example, in Karene and Koinadugu districts where food prospects for the 1918 hungry season appeared favourable. Unfortunately those in Railway District were unable to control the weeds consequently neglecting their farms and unharvested rice. Once more, government moved in to control the price of rice, prohibiting its export except on licence.⁵¹

Official attempts to control the situation were however stop-gap measures designed to halt a potentially escalating crisis. Despite the partially favourable conditions of 1917, farmers benefited very little from the experiments carried out on the farm at Njala, where varieties of rices like "demerara creole" produced good results, the soil being fed with dressings of ammonia sulphate. Furthermore by 1917, the original rain forests of Sierra Leone had been considerably reduced through traditional farming methods and apart from Northern Sherbro, rice farmers were responsible for most of the damage. It was even doubtful whether there was more than 1,000 square miles of high forest remaining in Sierra Leone and the situation was approximating the savannah

conditions of Northern Ashanti.⁵²

In 1918, government was forced to contend with natural disasters well beyond its control. The conditions leading to the famine of 1919, were preceded by early rains in 1918 which prevented farmers from burning the bush off the land. None of the large trees had been felled when the rains began; that year the average rainfall for most areas between March and April stood between 7.75 and 9.93 inches. Rice farmers therefore had to turn all available labour on their farm to hand clearing the area for planting. The operation was slow and the land required constant weeding.

The influenza epidemic further worsened the fortunes of farmers and with only between 50 to 60% of a normal crop produced, a severe shortage was anticipated for 1919. D C Addison (Sherbro) therefore suggested that a law be passed making it compulsory for every town, village and "fakai" to reserve a quantity of rice for the annual hungry season. Such rice was not to be "touched," sold or pledged without the permission of the D C or traditional authority. Though swamp rice grown in the estuaries produced good crops, the areas under cultivation were small and this necessitated increased cultivation of cassava and sweet potatoes.⁵³

So grave was the problem that by late October, members of the Sierra Leone Clerical Service drawing about £100 a year were also requesting a war bonus as a relief from hard times; so were members of the technical and industrial staff - medical dispensers, nurses, foremen of works, surveyors, draughtsmen, printers and storekeepers.

The prices of some food items by 1918 are instructive in order to show the rising cost of living. Bread had increased from 3 to 6d a pound, sugar from 3 to 10d a pound, butter from 1/9d to 4/ a pound, milk from 6d to 1/3d a tin, rice from 8/ to 12/6d a bushel of 84lbs, meat from 7d - 1/6d a pound, yam from between 3/4d and 4/6d to between 12/ and 15/ a dozen and palm oil from 5/ to 15/ a tin of four gallons.⁵⁴

THE YEAR OF RICE RIOTS - 1919

By February 1919 the desperation caused by rising food prices, unemployment⁵⁵ and government's apparent discriminatory approaches over the grant of the war bonus were precipitating conditions of rowdyism, "robbery" and general insecurity. According to the Governor many Africans had "formed themselves into armed bands by whom wholesale robberies are done from one end of the town to another." Many people were therefore apprehensive over "what may happen before the present quarter of the year is out."⁵⁶

With the failure of the rice crop in 1918, a great shortage was anticipated from March 1919 onwards. Government's response to the crisis was to suggest the importation of £1,000 worth of foreign rice which was to be given to chiefs in return for labour, and to forestall attempts by combines to corner rice. The only problem then was where to obtain the rice from. Madagascar's exportable surplus was intended for Mauritius and South Africa's price - £47 a ton - was highly prohibitive, whilst that from the Persian Gulf was dismissed as useless. The only alternatives were Egypt and Siam.⁵⁷

At a time when Germany was coming to peace terms with the Allies, Britain was about to witness the worst riots in post-war Sierra Leone. Among other things, the main trigger for rural and urban radicalism was a general dearth of rice and food shortages. By July 1919, rice was sold for about 5d and 6d a cigarette tin full and £2 a bushel. The situation itself was aggravated by the profiteering and hoarding tactics of local traders, chiefs and Syrians. So widespread was the famine that reports of emaciated people flooded the capital. It was obvious by this time that a general economic decline and the almost universal slump in the export trade were beginning to have an impact in the body politic.

The problems associated with cultivation in the Sierra Leone, government's requisitioning of rice throughout the war period, and the serious administrative lapses which punctuated government's efforts to solve the crisis of 1919 had done little to halt the drift towards near anarchy in the post-war dependency. For example the daily-wage employees of the Mechanical and Locomotive branches of the Railway Department ordered a strike on 15th July⁵⁸ over war bonus and hungry rioters moved in to exploit the situation. These variables show that the Syrians were not entirely responsible for the crisis of July 1919 and therefore merit attention.

In searching for answers to the almost perennial problem of rice shortage, an examination of the system of cultivation then, is instructive. Farmers sowed their farms too thinly, brushed and burned too large an acreage and made no attempts to restore the fertility of the soil by digging in organic

matter, green manuring and fallowing. Original farms were therefore allowed to revert to bush for about seven years.⁵⁹ By 1915, the absence of mechanical transport on the Kailahun-Pendembu, Lago-Panguma and Bo-Pujehun roads meant employing large numbers of men for transporting materials - men whose energies could otherwise have been deployed in agriculture and rice production.⁶⁰

If the general dislocation in trade caused by war conditions led to abnormal prices for consumer products, agriculture during the war was hampered by erratic rainfall such as that in 1915.⁶¹ Experiments carried out on the farm at Njala had shown that better results were obtainable by deep hoeing than by orchard cultivation⁶² but by December 1916, the availability of rice and prospects for further cultivation were clearly dependent on the availability of machets which were then "practically exhausted." Much of this was due to the closure of the German market.

As the importation of foreign rice became difficult there was great panic in the Protectorate,⁶³ and in January 1917, the D C's office at Ronietta was flooded with applications for machets. D C Fairtlough therefore requested some 2,000 from the P W D or Railway Construction Stores failing which, he suggested the provision of half a ton of iron bars or some hoop iron which the smiths could convert to implements for use on the farms. Only in February did the Secretary of State order that 100,000 machets be sent to Freetown.⁶⁴ These began arriving by August 1918 when influenza was also threatening agriculture.⁶⁵

The system of requisitioning rice for the troops was also to have an impact on food supplies. In response to fears of a possible shortage in 1914, the military was asking that 500,000lbs be reserved for their requirements. Chiefly support in the acquisition of surplus rice was turned to good account when in October, 1,008 bags were sent to the Cameroons.⁶⁶ Between August and December 1914, more than 1,000 bushels had been supplied by Koinadugu and Karene (400 bags from Port Loko) to form part of the Defence Scheme stores and to service the troops in the Cameroons.⁶⁷ Throughout 1915, the chiefs in Ronietta supplied 54 tons to the military authorities and when in February 98 1/4 tons were shipped to Duala this included 65 tons from Karene.⁶⁸

By June 1915, Dobell was requesting 50 tons a month, but uncertainty regarding the duration of the war made it difficult for D C's to meet this demand. Supplies had been dissipated in the Railway District and the prospects of a bad rice crop in Ronietta aggravated the situation. In Bonthe, the handsome contributions of Paramount Chief Samuel Margai led to fears of a shortage. On the whole, the process exerted severe pressures on chiefs like Papu Powi and the carriers of P C Margai who had to travel long distances to transport the rice to the railway.⁶⁹ The massive shipment to the Cameroons and the lack of any price control merely exacerbated the famine conditions of 1916 for between January 1915 and March 1916, 25,636 bushels were shipped to the troops.⁷⁰

Once the W A F F returned from the Cameroons the pressure on the districts to provide rice for them in 1917 increased. With the Railway District being requested to supply 4,000 bushels in October, D C Bowden urged that more equitable demands be made on each district, for apart from feeding the company at Bandajuma, he had to provide for the Bo School, traders and settlers. Ronietta could not help due to the late harvest. In fact D C Stanley (Northern Sherbro) was to warn against discouraging cultivation through requisitioning chiefs for rice below its market value. At Karene, requisitioning coupled with high prices charged by the S.C.O.A. was already imposing severe hardships on the chiefs and people.⁷¹

The same conditions prevailed in the Railway District where the cultivator found his foodstuffs requisitioned at anytime "... without payment" or "below the market price." The results were disastrous for both producers and chiefs and in places like Kabala and Northern Sherbro, the exactions of government officials led to widespread rural-urban migration to join the ranks of the Carrier Corps, to take up work in Freetown or even migrate to Fernando Po through Liberia. By 1917, therefore, several large towns hitherto shown on Captain Bond's map (1907) had virtually disappeared.⁷²

Rice and Food in the Protectorate

In order to appreciate the ferocity of mob action, one must also examine the fortunes of the rice crop in the districts albeit briefly. In spite of its agricultural potential - endowed as it was with miles and miles of deep soil, -

Ronietta was yet to become "one of the richest and most productive of the districts."⁷³ By 1915, the quest for money had become tied more than ever before to rice production. As rice fetched good prices, the low rates paid for palm kernels led many to sell their surplus for cash and this marked the prelude to the famine of 1916.⁷⁴

The phenomenal shortages which characterised the rice crop between 1914 and 1916 were considerably worsened by natural hazards and the influenza epidemic in 1918 when the early rains hampered shifting cultivation. Seeding was therefore delayed and the cultivated rice below average.⁷⁵ Perhaps more than anywhere else, the Railway District was most illustrative of the threat posed to food supplies by artificial and natural causes. Though the rainfall for 1916 was good in the district, by June, the return of carriers was to make significant inroads into the surplus crop. As more rice was needed for the returnees, borrowing became general and scarcity very widespread. More importantly, the new class of wealthy men who were assuming prominence, (based on the perquisites which they enjoyed) due to the extortionate practices of chiefs and sub-chiefs, added to the problem through the need to supply their retainers with rice and food.⁷⁶

Indeed as the successful and roving life of the peddler diverted many people away from the farms, it became obvious that wealth was the bane of agricultural production in the Railway District.⁷⁷ By 1917, rice had become an article of commerce and as producers parted with their surplus, this led

to speculation and an attempt to corner foodstuffs.⁷⁸ As influenza precluded the successful harvesting of rice in 1918 both swamp and upland rice were left to the mercy of the birds and the D C had to warn against the practice of speculating in rice.⁷⁹

Noted for its very vibrant export trade in rice, Karene was yet to turn to good account the miles and miles of country in the coastal regions so eminently suited for the cultivation of coconuts. In 1915 upland rice suffered from the heavy rains whilst a good deal of the rice crop was smuggled over the border to French Guinea in 1916 in spite of the prohibition on exports.⁸⁰ Not even the Experimental Farm at Batkanu (Karene) could alleviate the situation and the food scarcity was the worst since 1910.⁸¹ If sweet potatoes, cassava and yams yielded good crops in 1917,⁸² up-land rice and subsidiary crops like fundi, guinea corn, millet and groundnuts succumbed to the ravages of the early rains and influenza in 1918⁸³ and the D C feared a recurrence of 1910 conditions.⁸⁴

The partial famine conditions of 1916 and the scarcity of ripe palm nuts meant that there was little available cash in Northern Sherbro "and most of the larger towns were suffering from hunger."⁸⁵ The district was endowed with alluvial soil capable of producing excellent rice; climatically, it had a higher percentage of rainy and cloudy days than anywhere in the Protectorate. But these agricultural advantages by 1916 remained undeveloped and though marsh land abounded suitable for cattle grazing, the lack of any knowledge of cattle

management meant that this was yet to complement the viable fishing industry in the coastal chiefdoms.⁸⁶

It was however the debilitating effects of the war, acute food shortages, the failure of the rice crop and influenza which worsened the plight of the populace in Northern Sherbro in 1918. According to the D C, influenza struck when the hill crops were ripening and "children driving birds...died in the shanties which they built;" and though rice was planted in the water meadows, the water levels were inconsistent and the capital needed to prosecute the industry was limited.⁸⁷ So great was the scarcity in Krim and Bullom chiefdoms that D C Shuffrey reported great "suffering" in April 1919.⁸⁸

To the north in Koinadugu, upland and swamp rice produced good albeit modest yields in 1918 but the district did not escape the hazards of the early rains and the consequent rice shortage produced hunger among the people. To these conditions should be added the ravages of wild animals which, because of the absence of gun powder, did much damage to rice farms. "I myself saw rice farms eaten almost bare by buffalo" wrote the D C. Food supplies in Koinadugu were also depleted by cattle diseases in Yalunka country and among the Mandinka settlements of the Maboale valley.

On the eve of the riots the blessings of the cattle herds were yet to be turned into good account. With the exception of the Fulas, the people of Koinadugu failed to use cattle for consumption purposes for "there was no reason why

the...population of Freetown should not be supplied" with butter and milk from the herds. The efforts of the Mandingo Development Corporation in Kamadugu chiefdom had not really begun to yield positive results by early 1919.⁸⁹ A hungry season was therefore rightly predicted.⁹⁰

THE SYRIANS AND RICE SHORTAGES

Although the literature on Syrian trade in Colonial Sierra Leone is very thin, recent archival research shows that between the late 1880's and 1914, the Syrians were a steadily increasing community in Freetown and the Protectorate.⁹¹ By 1916, they had become the principal shippers of kola⁹² (supplanting their Krio, Temne and Susu rivals) and by 1917 were acting as agents for Spanish steamers bringing cargo to Sierra Leone⁹³ and as intermediaries in the nascent cocoa industry.⁹⁴ Syrian success in trade was predicated on loyalty to each other, cooperation in business and access to capital.⁹⁵ But if the Syrians were regarded by officialdom as a group which gave "little trouble...are universally respectful and ready to listen to reason,"⁹⁶ to what extent were they responsible for the rice shortages of 1919? The evidence adduced so far based on the agricultural history of Sierra Leone, and official policy towards the problem of rice shortages, should help persuade the historian to eschew monofocal approaches in explaining the riots of July 1919.

By 1916 however when it was still difficult to obtain country rice, European firms like Paterson Zochonis were complaining that the Syrians had been firmly established in "practically every nook and corner of the Protectorate..." and were

"successfully trying to corner the market for rice." Those on the line at Taiama and Mano were offering high prices for "native rice," preventing European firms from securing a normal supply. As a result, high prices ruled in Freetown - between 14 and 15/ a bushel - at a time when no rice was being sent to the Cameroons and when the normal price offered was between 8/6d and 10/ a bushel.⁹⁷ So severe was the distress felt by the men of the W A R that many sold their official and personal clothing and deserted in large numbers.⁹⁸ By this time European firms had also joined in the game of cornering rice. The S C O A was particularly guilty of this in the Banta and Bagru chiefdoms in Ronietta. Not even the tenders of the French Coy and Moses Allen at Pendembu could meet the W A F F's requirement of 7,000 bushels at Daru.⁹⁹

The complex variations in prices per bushel in many parts of the Protectorate¹⁰⁰ provided many opportunities for flagrant breaches of the Weights and Measures Ordinance by Syrians at Bo, Mano and Gerihun (using illegal measures) in spite of many convictions. Though some European firms eschewed the use of force, the inevitable cut-throat competition which evolved, forced them to fall back on "coaxers" to amass produce and with Syrian traders strewn all along the line, the firms had to keep pace with the "illegal methods" then in vogue.¹⁰¹

By July 1919, the Syrians had "monopolised the rice trade" and bought the new crop in some districts "so as to keep the price up..." The Commissioner of Police then had to

prosecute two Syrians for selling rice - between 45 and 50/ - well above proclamation prices. Syrians also compounded the food problem by making significant inroads into the local "foo-foo" trade¹⁰² so that officialdom itself was forced to confirm the "underhand nature of these creatures..."¹⁰³ The difficulty therefore of retrieving Syrian goods from many houses (where the looters had hoarded them) in the aftermath of the riots against them, and the lack of any proof against individuals supposedly involved in the raids in Makeni, provide enough evidence of the intensity of local feeling against the Syrians.¹⁰⁴

What the local population (many of whom were to take to rioting in July) resented most were the methods employed by the Syrians to corner rice, and the "insolent and overbearing" manner with which they greeted appeals from those seeking rice. One man alleged he was told- "We will make you Creoles eat grass." ¹⁰⁵ Through the formation of Syrian rings and combines, prices of produce were artificially forced up and "Krio girls," "unmarried females" and "old widows" squeezed out of the petty trading business in "foo-foo," "parched groundnuts" and "kanyah" (i.e. ground and sweetened rice). The Syrian tactic was to employ their "native wives" and provide them with the necessary capital to trade in these foodstuffs.

For many years, the Syrians had perfected the so-called "sama practice," whereby a trader would take advantage of the hungry season to extort a promise of huge amounts of produce when harvested, in return for an advance of money and meat.

In fact by February 1919, many rice farmers were mortgaging their farms to Syrians in places like Port Loko and Koinadugu.¹⁰⁶ Though outlawed in 1918, many factors encouraged "sama contracts." The practice was made possible by the "improvident habits of the average native," who devoured or sold all his produce (even seed rice) during the harvest which he had to buy again at exorbitant prices. Syrians were thus able to inflate the price of rice in spite of a plentiful harvest.

By Saturday 1st August 1919 for example, one Madam Sassin was collecting rice debts in Temne country - in return for credits advanced in 1918 - and advancing loans at 4/ a bushel against the next season's rice crop in Mambolo Loko Masama chiefdom. Other Syrians were doing the same at Port Loko. The fact that there was a glut in the rice market - rice being sold for as low as 2d a cup - after the raids, that 600 bushels were retrieved from a Syrian tenant of one Mrs Brown, further served to buttress the charges against the Syrians.

In order to evade the law and take advantage of high prices, Syrians and other profiteers sent their rice up country in exchange for palm kernels. Thus at Mafwe in the Railway District, 500 bushels of rice were found in the house of a Syrian who had previously been sentenced for aggravated assaults in Bumpe chiefdom. In these and many other ways were the Syrians culpable. Finding the evidence against them irrefutable, the Colonial Office concluded that "the holding up of rice was a considerable part of the cause"¹⁰⁷ of the riots of 1919.

By July 1919 therefore, the impact of rice shortages had become universal. Work on the Kessewe Hills was retarded due to widespread starvation and resort was had to the oil palm for its "cabbage" and to diverse "bush fruits." This, and the feverish efforts by government to send rice up country in August should partly explain the ferocity of mob action throughout the Protectorate.¹⁰⁸ Sufficient evidence abounds to support the thesis of rice shortages. At Ronietta, the D C attributed the riots to "food shortages" which put the "native riff raff...in a ripe state for mischief..." at Bauya, Moyamba, Mano, Makump, Kangahun and Tabe.¹⁰⁹ At Bonthe, D C Page found that the "lawless movement" was the direct result of hunger.¹¹⁰ According to D C Hollins (Ronietta) the only remedy was the prompt despatch of a supply of rice,¹¹¹ because at Kambia (Karene) where Krios and Syrians were regarded as intruders, rice shortages made the people restless and only the strong influence of the Kumrabai (chief) held them in check.¹¹²

Despite the emphasis by nearly all D C's on rice shortage, Colonial Office thinking was chiefly informed by white perceptions of Freetown's Krio since 1898. By arguing that the Krios "inspired" and "controlled" the riots¹¹³ of 1919 the Colonial Office either underestimated or chose to ignore the authentic economic distress, grievances, and privations which had been partly introduced into the dependency by World War 1. Only after the mob had committed the worst excesses did it begin to dawn on C.O. officials that the disturbances at Liverpool had made it impossible for ships to take rice from that port to Freetown.

However related the Liverpool disturbances¹¹⁴ (based on the sexual relations between Black men and White women) were to the Syrians' association with Krio girls in Freetown¹¹⁵ as a factor in the riots, it could hardly be denied that the most immediate cause was rice shortage and in this, the Colonial Government was particularly culpable for a series of administrative lapses which characterised its efforts to address the question of shortage. Coming as they did in the wake of the controversy over the war bonus, the riots soon ensured that acting Governor Evelyn had "a pack of troubles to make him remember peace day."¹¹⁶ Mr Ellis found him particularly reprehensible for not enforcing the maximum price of rice and for not bringing down prices by selling the rice which the government then had in store.¹¹⁷

In the main, Evelyn had failed to act quickly at precisely that point where action was badly needed. Wilkinson found his subordinate "unequal to the position of Acting Governor. He was dilatory in the matter of war bonus, inert in the famine..." and "timid in the face of the strikers."¹¹⁸ Indeed the catalogue of administrative mistakes which punctuated the rice crisis of 1918 and 1919 to some extent made the riots inevitable. For example, no steps were taken to distribute by sale or otherwise the 32 tons of government rice which had arrived in the Colony on 30th June 1919; no steps were taken to import the £5,000 worth of rice on government account as was authorised by the Executive Council on 14th April 1919, nothing was done regarding the resolution of the council to reduce the railway freight for rice sent to the Protectorate or to meet the deficiency of rice in the Protectorate as

reported by Captain Benham on 20th June and by Mr Hollins on 28th June 1919. Therefore, with a weakened police force and a rather "nebulous" governmental control over the imperial forces of the West African Regiment, the rioters were bound to have a field day against the Syrians.¹¹⁹

By February 1919, knowledge of an imminent rice famine -first mooted by the Director of Agriculture in January¹²⁰ and made concrete by the "subterfuge" adopted by traders to annul proclamation prices fixed by the Food Committee¹²¹ - was confirmed by all D.C.s who agreed that government should secure shipments of cereals. On 26th February 1919, the Acting Colonial Secretary assured leading firms that the selling price of rice would be fixed to allow them a reasonable profit if they imported rice. By 25th March the Executive Council was seeking permission from the Secretary of State to import rice for relief purposes. When Wilkinson visited the Protectorate in early April he found that adequate action had not been taken to mitigate the rice problem. Local supplies held out until his departure for leave and this prevented him from using the authority granted by the Secretary of State.

By late April however, the rice question had driven a wedge between government and the Chamber of Commerce, the latter determined to prove that the Syrians were the real culprits. They refused to furnish information on the stocks held by leading firms, disagreed with government's assessment of the shortage and refused to import more rice unless assured that the government would not import any. Whilst refusing to

honour the wishes of the Chamber, the Executive Council on 12th May also agreed to reduce railway freight by half for any rice sent to the Protectorate, at a time when foreign rice was being sold for 27/ in places like Moyamba.

Between 27th May and 27th June a series of miscalculations and the ineptitude displayed by some government officials over the rice issue, led to starvation in many parts of the Protectorate.¹²² Indeed, Mr Maude the Colonial Secretary "did not show himself" a "useful adviser to Mr Evelyn...but for Mr Maude, there would have been...no hostility because of the famine."¹²³ On 27th May and 16th June, Mr Maude refused pleas for rice from the Director of Agriculture and the D C Railway. This amounted to a cancellation of the Executive Council's decision of 12th May. In fact, by arguing that the rice requested was "government owned" he was wrongly referring to the 32 tons imported through the Crown Agents and not the rice in Council's circular.

By June therefore, the bureaucratic hurdles which stood in the way of rice distribution ensured starvation and deaths at Moyamba and Railway District. Mr Maude complicated the situation by arguing that government's response to the problem would be "general...not special." Yet, when on 1st July Mr Hollins reported great "distress" in Railway District, no reply was received. By 3rd July when as much as 50/ was being paid per bushel, Mr Maude refused to advance money to the conservator of Forests to buy rice for his men. Transferred to Moyamba (Ronietta) on 24th July, Mr Hollins was appealing to government for urgent supplies of rice and

food to relieve the distress.

Freetown had its own share of problems and the matter was not lost on the press which continued to appeal to government for help. In the interim, the rice ordered remained in the customs shed until 15th August. When the riots erupted on 18th July there were 32 tons of rice at the shed and 148 tons consigned to Freetown on a steamer in the harbour. By failing to use its rice therefore, government added to an already worsening crisis. As Wilkinson rightly argued, had government used its rice to check profiteering or even gratuitously for road work in the Protectorate," its position would have been strengthened enormously."¹²⁴ The result was massive starvation and death and the Railway District was clearly illustrative of these results. Extreme "emaciation and deterioration due to underfeeding" were observed in Bo, Daru, Segbwema, Baima and Pendembu among the boys and children were "palpably thinner than in normal times..."¹²⁵ The same was true for Karene¹²⁶ and Pujehun¹²⁷ where the triggers for revolt came from widespread hunger.

Major Farrar best summed up the likely consequences of starvation when he argued in June that "in its civil aspect the suffering might not improbably lead to riots and looting..."¹²⁸ Such fears were amply vindicated on the night of 18th July 1919, when the first riots erupted in Freetown. Once "the ordinary country people" began "eating the young cassava which in the ordinary way would not have been eaten,"¹²⁹ not even the prompt despatch of troops to the scenes of riotous conduct could halt the drift towards

anarchy in post-war Sierra Leone.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND THE RIOTS OF 1919

A look at the riots albeit briefly would help explain the thesis of food shortages and throw light on the political consequences which the war had for Sierra Leone. The war had brought untold hardships to many in the Colony and the Protectorate and those who bore the brunt of a dwindling revenue were not surprisingly the peasant producers. Far from setting in motion a series of actions designed to ameliorate the situation, officialdom was preoccupied with raising taxation and export duties. Whatever advances had been made in revenue in 1918 were at best deceptive so that by 1919, the administration was forced to contend with an excess of expenditure caused principally by the payment of war bonuses and a depreciation in the value of the investments of the Colony.

In the circumstances food prices rose to unprecedented levels whilst rice, the nation's staple was subjected to natural hazards. It is against this background of a general economic decline and an apparent apathy shown by the administration that we must understand the drift towards anarchy in the post-war dependency instead of shifting blame to the Krio as the administration did.¹³⁰ Admittedly there was already bad blood between the Krios and the Syrians based on trade rivalry but when the rioters struck in July they did not do so in response to the Krio plea to expel the Syrians neither were they pawns in the hands of the Krio intelligentsia. Instead rioting was more a response to economic grievances and privation.

As has been amply demonstrated, many District Commissioners imputed the riots to food shortages and high prices. Yet far from assessing the impact of the war on the dependency, officialdom was content to find scapegoats among the elites in the community. Thus attempts by Krio settlers in Bo to warn the administration of an impending attack were greeted with the usual contempt and levity as in 1898. By adopting this stance, the administration was indirectly denying the authentic economic grievances of the population.

The outbreak was sudden and commenced in Freetown on the night of 18th July. First intimations about the riots reached the Governor through the Commissioner of Police, Major Heslip when a crowd besieged a Syrian shop at Westmoreland Street. Police inadequacy to curb the initial excesses forced the Governor to call out the military in aid of the civil power. Although the troops had been held in readiness when the Great Railway Strike¹³¹ erupted on 15th July 1919, there was some delay in despatching them to the scenes of looting. The first phase of the rioting only petered out around 5.00 am. when the troops returned to barracks.

By Saturday (19th July) rioting and looting of Syrian shops commenced once more and taxed the energies of three companies of the West African Regiment to the full. When calm returned to Freetown security was provided by both "the police and a number of Creole gentlemen who have offered their services as constables."

In their usual predilection to find scapegoats for the outbreak, the government noted that "in no single instance were the business premises of the European and Creole merchants interfered with. The shop of a Creole trader who was believed to be profiteering in rice was threatened but no attack was actually made on it." The economic element in the riots was underlined by the fact that in the earliest skirmishes as well as in later encounters, attacks were directed more against property than against persons, though the riots claimed 3 victims in Freetown. One Syrian was shot accidentally by an apparently jittery compatriot; another died from the effects of the beating he received; so did a woman who gave birth prematurely.¹³²

Because of the impossibility of providing adequate protection for the Syrians in their own homes, about 213 were temporarily quartered in the Wilberforce Memorial Hall ("which has been generously placed at my disposal by the City Council") and in two houses at Garrison Street and East Street. By the 20th intelligence reports intimated that the disturbances would spread to the Protectorate. Telegraphic communication with the Protectorate had been suspended because of the railway strike, but the "devotion and loyalty" of the Krio Telegraph Superintendent, Mr Jones, made it possible for the government to despatch telegrams to the District Commissioners of Ronietta and Railway districts, to the Officer Commanding the Troops, Daru, and the Officer Commanding the detachment at Bandajuma.¹³³

Urban violence abated for some four days and in the interim,

the ground swell of discontent against the Syrians gathered momentum in the Protectorate. The first centre of attack was Moyamba where on Friday 25th July, predatory raids were organised against Syrian storekeepers at Bauya and those on the branch railway threatened at Mano. As in the initial riot in Freetown lack of adequate protection gave the rioters a field day at Moyamba. Of particular significance is the fact that the D.C. attributed the occurrence at Moyamba to "scarcity of food and high prices."¹³⁴

By 26th July, the gravity of the situation forced the government to arrange a meeting of the Executive Council and to circularise the D.C.s all over the Protectorate regarding the impending threat to the Syrians. The train service to Kamabai for the 26th was ordered to return to Makeni in order to facilitate the transport of troops and for relieving the detachment at Mano from Daru.¹³⁵ In addition to the use of force, chiefs were urged to assist in preventing and suppressing rioting within their chiefdoms.¹³⁶ For prevention at Bonthe, the government recommended that special constables be enlisted.¹³⁷

In spite of the formidable security apparatus which was set in motion, the raiders made good their threats at Moyamba and Mano on the night of Friday 25th July¹³⁸ and launched predatory raids on the Syrians at Makump.¹³⁹ Kangahun on the branch railway was attacked on the 26th.¹⁴⁰ Though there were no casualties in all these areas in Ronietta District, the D.C. was forced to request Captain Benham for a redeployment of half of his force originally detailed to

Yonibana and to send the other half to Moyamba.¹⁴¹ In all 34 soldiers (albeit inadequate) were despatched from Makeni.¹⁴²

The railway line seemed to have been the chief instrument for coordinating centres of attacks and parties of rioters travelled rapidly up the line from Freetown throughout the Protectorate. On the 25th therefore when Moyamba came under attack, a restless situation prevailed at Bo. The alarm was caused by soldiers who it seems were intent "on inciting riot among peaceful people." By this time however, officialdom was convinced that the main instigators of the riots were Krios. When the latter, stationed at Bo, requested help from Lt. Strachan, he "threatened something worse and stated that he cannot speak with niggers - please oblige protection."¹⁴³ The D.C. however defended the Krio settlers by attributing the "very trivial occurrences" to other "persons from down line by first up train".¹⁴⁴

The next day 200 rioters arrived at Bo by train from Mano. Because precaution had been taken the object of the raiders was frustrated. By night however a Syrian's store at the edge of the town was looted.¹⁴⁵ Sumbuya also came under attack though futile, on the 27th and troops had to be ordered from Bandajuma.¹⁴⁶ By the 31st, when peace returned to the Railway District 40 rioters had been arrested.¹⁴⁷

The pattern of events in Karene was rather intriguing and the rioters seemed to have resorted to a propaganda campaign intended to invest their actions with legitimacy. News travelled fast from Freetown to the district and by Sunday

20th July panic-stricken Syrians rushed to the Officer Commanding the detachment of the West African Regiment at Port Loko. Since the Loko people had started laying siege to the Syrian houses and shops the O.C. organised a strong piquet in the town. What stirred up the local people was rather curious; they had received reports "that the "government was telling people in Freetown that they could help themselves to Syrian goods." Convinced therefore of official complicity in the riots, they were to interpret the O.C.'s mission to the town to examine the situation, as an attempt to start raiding on his own. As he reported later, "...people came rushing up and pointing out different Syrians as possessing large properties. There was quite an air of surprised disappointment when it was found out that this was not part of the programme."

Due to the cessation of the ordinary river trade between Freetown and Port Loko, many of the inhabitants of Port Loko were temporarily unemployed and they were to find in rioting and looting, a safe outlet for their energies. As in Moyamba the triggers for rebellion were provided by the desperate food situation and the acute shortage of rice. Supplies ordered en route during the Freetown riots had still not arrived by the 23rd and Sheka, the Alikali's brother, complained to the O.C. that "the food situation is very bad." Just four hours away from Port Loko the situation was far from peaceful. Trouble was also brewing at Mange ("a fairly big place with a lot of Syrians.") where the inhabitants were threatening to plunder the Syrians.¹⁴⁸

Unlike Freetown and Moyamba, the disturbances at Karene were minor ones.¹⁴⁹ The drift towards anarchy seemed to have abated at Mange after the O.C. had remonstrated with Bai Inga, the Paramount Chief but as at Port Loko, the prevailing idea was that "the government no agree for the Syrians to be here." At Mange also, the food position was worsened by the riots and the "Country people are now eating the young cassava which in the ordinary way would not have been eaten for another two or three months, and rice is practically impossible to get."¹⁵⁰

Apart from these districts mentioned, all was apparently quiet elsewhere except for Waterloo in Headquarter District in the Colony where two Syrian shops were looted on the night of the 26th July.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that unlike Southern and Northern Nigeria where revolts in World War 1 were directed against the policies of the colonial government,¹⁵¹ in Sierra Leone, the riots were not aimed at the nerve-centre of the colonial apparatus. The food riots of 1919 could also not be seen part of the nationalist movement designed to secure independence.

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130. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. M.P. C.227/1919. Evidence of Mr Evelyn, (Acting Governor) and Mr Maude (Attorney General).

131. For background to the strike see S.L.N.A. C.S.O. M.P. Railway 228/1916 - Petition of C.W. Schlenker, J.E. Jones, E.V. Rollings et al to Wilkinson, 13/11/16. For the strike of 15th July 1919 - see Colonial and Provincial Reporter 19/7/19 and Sierra Leone Royal Gazette 16/10/20.

132. S.L.N.A. C.S.O. S.L. Conf. No. 357 M.P. C.104/1919. 31/7/19. See also P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/48071. Evelyn - Milner, Desp. 357 31/7/1919.

133. See S.L.N.A. Telegram 4 (A) - Governor to D.C. Moyamba; (B) Governor to D.C. Kenema; (C) Governor to Officer Commanding the W.A.F.F. Daru; (D) Governor to Officer Commanding Detachment, W.A.F.F. Bandajuma. 20/7/19.

134. Telegram Nos 1 and 2, D.C. Moyamba - Colonial Secretary, 25/7/19 (Received 26/7/19 Encl. in Governors' Despatch 31/7/919); See also P.R.O. C.O. 267/582/43892, Telegram, Evelyn -Secretary of State, 26/7/19, in despatch, Telegram, 26/7/19.

135. See Telegrams 3, 4 and 5. Governor to Officer Commanding W.A.F.F. Makeni, Officer Commanding W.A.F.F., Daru and to D.C. Moyamba, 26/7/19.

136. Telegram Nos 5 - 8 - Governor to D.C. Moyamba, D.C. Railway District, D.C. Batkanu, Karene District and D.C. Pujehun, 26/7/19.

137. Telegram IX - Governor to D.C. Bonthe 26/7/19.

138. Telegram X D.C. Moyamba (Ronietta District) to Colonial Secretary Freetown 26/7/19.

139. Telegram XV - D.C. Moyamba to Colonial Secretary Freetown 27/7/19.

140. *ibid.*

141. Telegram XII - D.C. Moyamba to Governor 26/7/919.

142. Telegram XIV - D.C. Moyamba to Colonial Secretary; 27/7/19.

143. Telegram XVII - Settlers, Bo, to Governor 26/7/1919.

144. Telegram XIX - Commissioner, Railway District to Colonial Secretary 26th July 1919.

145. Telegram XXIII - Commissioner Railway District to Governor 31/7/19.

146. Telegram XXII - Commissioner Railway District to Colonial Secretary 28/7/19.
147. Telegram XXIV - Commissioner, Bo, to Governor 31/7/19.
48. Extracts from a letter from O.C., Detachment, West African Regiment, Port Loko, 23/7/19.
149. Telegram, D.C. Karene to Secretary Freetown 26th July 1919.
150. Extracts from a letter from O.C. Detachment West African Regiment, Port Loko, after his visit to Mange 25/7/19.
151. See A. Osuntokun - Nigeria in the First World War (Longman Group Limited, London, 1979) pp.100-166.

CONCLUSION

Seven years after the cessation of international hostilities, Hector Duff, in assessing the impact of World War 1 on "Black men's countries" argued that "...in such a war, the natives over whose heads it is fought...will always be the greatest sufferers..."¹ Duff, may probably have been influenced by Buchan's comment that Africans were drawn into "...a quarrel in which they had not been consulted...in which their losses were certain and their gains speculative..."² Though educated elites in some African dependencies were apprehensive of these consequences,³ "the response of the empire was instant, unequivocal and complete..."⁴ Like many other British colonies, Sierra Leone played a significant part in World War 1. Apart from sending recruits to help fight the Germans in Togoland, the Cameroons, East Africa and Mesopotamia, the colonial administration in Freetown provided funds, ammunition and foodstuff to help equip and maintain the troops in the various theatres of war.

Committed as it was to supporting the Allies against the Central Powers, the war had significant consequences for Sierra Leone. Drawing on a wide range of hitherto untapped archival sources, this thesis examines the impact of the Great War on "ancient and loyal Sierra Leone" between 1914 and 1919. By so doing it contributes to the growing literature on Africa and World War 1. The thesis eschews what Edmund Dane refers to as the "dry technical manner"⁵ in which the many campaigns of the period have hitherto been presented; instead it examines the military, social, economic

and political impacts of the war on Sierra Leone. As war clouds gathered over Europe, many in Sierra Leone became convinced that the crisis was not just a "White Man's palaver" and despite the bitter acrimony that characterised Anglo-Krio relations by 1913, Sierra Leone provided human and material resources for the Allies. Support for Britain came from all sections of the community but although Merewether found these expressions of loyalty "spontaneous," officialdom at the end of the war did not reciprocate these efforts as the community had hoped. The obligations which the war imposed on Sierra Leone coupled with the temporary redeployment of officers impinged significantly on the smooth flow of the administration and drained the already depleted resources of the Colony.

The first part of the thesis examines the impact of military recruitment on the dependency. Deeply apprehensive of German attacks on Sierra Leone Governor Merewether advised against denuding the Protectorate of troops but the emergency was in the opinion of the Colonial Office, more pressing than the security of the Colony. Though mobilisation and recruitment were to generate much tension and apprehension in the dependency, by August 1917, thanks to chiefly loyalty and the efforts of District Commissioners, Sierra Leone had supplied 1,641 combatants and 13,023 non-combatants to the war effort. Of the non-combatants, 978 went to the Inland Water Transport; 11,890 were carriers whilst 220 served as gun carriers.⁶ At a time when the notion of the martial races was being given greater prominence, officialdom's refusal to allow the Krio to enlist merely generated a mood of

bitterness, unease and despondency in Krio circles. If recruitment helped to reduce the crime rate in Freetown it took away many able-bodied men from agriculture and depleted labour needed for public works. Returnees from the Cameroons and Mesopotamia aggravated the problems of unemployment and sanitation. In many ways the experience of World War 1 exposed the organisational drawbacks of the Sierra Leone Battalion and pointed to the need for reforms.

To a large extent, the war exposed the vulnerability of Sierra Leone to the spread of disease. The second part examines the problems of health, sanitation and disease in wartime. Deeply encumbered by an ad hoc approach to health and sanitation, officialdom was caught up in a desperate struggle to combat two epidemics - smallpox and influenza in 1916 and 1918 respectively. Problems of congestion in wartime, increased trade contacts with foreign countries like French Guinea and the lack of fumigation facilities for ships calling at the Freetown harbour facilitated the spread of smallpox, chickenpox and influenza. Financial constraints coupled with the perennial bickering among respective Sanitary and Health authorities in the Colony, the racial ethos that had come to dominate the medical service and the conflict between imperial and colonial interests, merely worsened the situation.

The available evidence shows that smallpox was endemic in Sierra Leone at least between 1898 and 1915. Originating in neighbouring French Guinea in 1915, smallpox was brought to Karene by traders passing through the trade route in Dixing

chiefdom. From here the disease spread to all parts of the Protectorate and was carried to Freetown in December. Smallpox struck with devastating rapidity, threatened whole villages, dislocated farming activity and bred famine conditions in many parts of the Protectorate. The epidemic was assisted in its course by a simultaneous outbreak of chickenpox. Apart from widespread vaccination, inoculation was resorted to in many parts of the Protectorate and the Colony but African hostility to Western medicine and vaccination compounded the efforts of the authorities to contain the disease. In the aftermath of the outbreak the government introduced many reforms including a new and rapid means for disinfecting huts and houses but the measures taken were largely administrative in nature and did little to combat the spread of disease or to cushion the dependency against diseases introduced by sea-borne traffic.

When the Spanish "flu" reached Freetown in August 1918, the fortunes of mercantile shipping in the dependency had been radically altered. The evidence shows that 1918 was a good year for shipping activity in terms of the number of vessels and tonnage which entered and left the port of Freetown. By the time of the outbreak, wartime privation, widespread food shortages, emaciation, suffering and distinct physical deterioration among the population were already beginning to attract the attention of officialdom. It was in these circumstances that the Mantua arrived in the harbour with cases of "flu" on board. The failure by government to take prophylactic action and the consequent coaling of the ship by local labourers soon ensured the spread of the disease with

disastrous consequences. Whilst the administration supplied throat gargle and disinfectant to contain the spread, the community experimented with a wide range of local remedies and socio-cultural practices that in some instances represented a cross between traditional and western medicine.

Influenza was accompanied by an alarming death toll almost unparalleled in the recorded history of the country. The disease dislocated business in both the mercantile and official sectors so that by October 1918, the Governor put the death toll at 1,000. The difficulties encountered by the authorities in determining even approximately the numbers affected by the "flu" were compounded by the migration of many victims to the Protectorate where, as in the Colony, many corpses were buried without the usual certificates of registration. Throughout the country the labour force generally employed in agriculture was immobilised as influenza combined with climatic hazards to deplete the rice crop and arrest progress in the oil palm industry.

In many ways the outbreak was a blessing in disguise for the almost acrimonious debates surrounding the origins of the disease led to many reforms being introduced by the administration. As in the case of smallpox, most of the quarantine rules introduced were largely of an administrative nature and the additional powers granted to health officers mainly empowered them to detain suspected persons for observation.

The final part looks at the nature of the economy in wartime,

the attempts by the administration to raise revenue, the fortunes of local producers and the nature of wartime trade in the districts. Apart from the elimination of German trade the lack of shipping space compounded the efforts of the administration to cushion the strains of war. By 1915, dwindling revenue returns pointed to the need for financial stringency. The problems of economic decline and the manipulative tactics of foreign firms were felt mainly by indigenous producers who consequently held back their produce in anticipation of higher prices. In Sierra Leone, the chief variables governing economic activity were unfavourable climatic conditions, the high tariff rates on spirits, the recruitment of potential labour for military service overseas, tax evasion in the Protectorate, and the closure of the German market. So that the phenomenal growth in revenue in 1918 was not indicative of any widespread accumulation of wealth. When the rains failed in 1918, indiscriminate profiteering by foreign firms and exploitative chiefs added to the crisis to produce a volatile situation in 1919. The result was the Anti-Syrian riots.

Wartime privation and economic backwardness were to impinge significantly on the already depleted supply of rice and food. Rice smuggling over the frontier to French Guinea, the requisitioning of rice by the military authorities, a general lack of protection for the African producer, the hoarding of rice by traders, serious lapses in administrative circles over the distribution of available rice and the general famine of 1919, intensified the problem of food shortages and provided the triggers for urban and rural radicalism.

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3. For the response of the elite in Nigeria see A. Osuntokun - Nigeria in the First World War (Longman, 1979)
4. S.L.W.N. 19/12/4; 7/11/14; 30/1/15; 4/10/19.
5. Buchan - "The Empire's War Effort" op. cit.
6. See the Preface in Edmund Dane - British Campaigns in Africa and the Pacific 1914-1918 (Hodder and Stoughton, London, New York, Toronto, 1919)
7. P.R.O. C.O. 267/578/40857 - Telegram, Wilkinson to Secretary of State 23/8/18 and P.R.O. C.O. 537/954/33394 - Inspector General A.H. Haywood, "Report on the combatant manpower of the Natives of British West Africa" 4/7/23.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C.M.S.	Church Missionary Society
C.O.	Colonial Office
Conf.	Confidential
C.S.M.	Company Sergeant Major
C.S.O	Colonial Secretary's Office
D.C.	District Commissioner
D.A.A. & Q.M.G	Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General
F.B.C.	Fourah Bay College
F.G.	Foreign Government
G.O.C.	General Officer Commanding
G.S.O	General Staff Officer
I.W.T.	Inland Water Transport
L.M.	Local Matter
M.P.	Minute Paper
N.C.O	Non-Commissioned Officer
O.C.	Officer Commanding
O.R.	Other Ranks
P.M.O.	Principal Medical Officer
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
P.W.D.	Public Works Department
R.S.M.	Regimental Sergeant Major
S.	Secret
S.L.	Sierra Leone
S.L.A.R.	Sierra Leone Annual Report
S.L.G.	Sierra Leone Government
S.L.N.A.	Sierra Leone National Archives
S.L.W.N.	Sierra Leone Weekly News
S.O.A.S.	School of Oriental and African Studies

S.S.F.F.	Secretary of State Frontier Force
W.A.F.F.	West African Frontier Force
W.A.M.S.	West african Medical Service
W.A.R.	West African Regiment
W.D.	War Department
W.I.R.	West Indian Regiment
W.O.	War Office
W.M.M.S.	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society

